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Love Without Borders



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Approved Translation

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跨越国界的爱

——高邮儿童福利院“涉外收养”寻访

Love Without Borders --

How Children from Gaoyou China
Found Homes Around the World

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Preface

Love is Mankind's Common Language

Zhou Zhengrong

In the early 1980's, when I was a reporter with the *Xinhua Daily* in Nanjing, I spent almost half a month doing a story on the Nanjing Children's Welfare Institute (CWI). After hearing and seeing first hand the fate of several hundred children - many born with birth defects - who had been abandoned by their birth parents, my heart and soul were shaken to the core. Those children were born to misfortune, and yet they were fortunate in that they were accepted by the Party and the government after they were abandoned by their parents. The caregivers at the CWI became their born-again parents, and loved and cared for them with the devotion of a kind mother, sparing no blood and tears in raising them. At that time, I wrote with stirred emotions a long editorial entitled "Child, Who Is Your Mother?" and had it published on one full-page of the *Xinhua Daily*.

Now, twenty years later, by some historical providence, my friend Ni Wencai brought me his manuscript *Love Across International Boundaries* and asked me to write a preface for it. This book takes a concern that had been close to my own heart at an earlier time to a new and higher plane, and tells the moving story of a group of American and Canadian parents who have adopted orphaned and handicapped children from China. The love bestowed on the unfortunate children in China and in foreign lands may come in different versions, but these versions are simply different manifestations of the same truth: love is mankind's common language.

In this book, the author has captured the essential spirit of international adoptions from his unique perspective and conveyed it eloquently to his readers. It is not an academic treatise, nor a novel or literary piece, but the work of a Chinese civil servant who, in his line of duty, became personally touched by a certain issue. This work is founded on the author's involvement in the international adoption program at the Gaoyou Children's Welfare Institute. From this starting point, the author fleshed out the theme of great humanistic love by using his contact with international adoptive families to relate the moving and vivid stories of these individual families.

As I read the entire manuscript, three characteristics of the book came into focus in my mind:

First and foremost is the high-minded vision manifested in the book. The author no doubt intends to awaken readers' compassion, concern and love for the orphaned and handicapped children in our society, who are among the most powerless and disadvantaged. How can we give these abandoned children the parental love that all children deserve? One of the most direct and effective ways is adoption. In this book, the author puts the spotlight on the realm of international adoptions, and depicts the boundless love bestowed on these Chinese children by their foreign families. Hence, these orphaned and handicapped children who had lost their birth parents found parental love from afar and recovered a normal happy childhood. It is worth noting that the author devotes a chapter - entitled "Love Is Calling - Making Every Effort to Stem Infant Abandonment" - exploring ways to solve the problem of infant abandonment from the various angles of social security, stance on reproduction, medical intervention, and rule of law. At the same time, in conveying the theme of the book, the author frequently highlights cultural differences between Chinese and foreign cultures. This approach prods readers toward greater understanding of the realities of interna-

tional adoptions, and stimulates them to engage in introspection and become more compassionate in their work on behalf of orphaned and handicapped children.

Secondly, the book is very rich and substantive in its content. To fully explore the theme of the book from all possible angles, the author investigated many relevant issues, collected and organized a large volume of research materials, and obtained a great deal of primary data from live sources. As an example, in a section entitled "Why do families in foreign countries adopt children?" the author tackles the puzzle behind foreign families coming to China to adopt in this way: "Through my American friend Charles Day, I contacted thirty families in the U.S. and Canada who have adopted children from Gaoyou, and sent them a questionnaire containing fourteen questions that I had formulated. These families responded with over 100 letters..." The author translated all these letters into Chinese, and then analyzed them to formulate coherent conclusions.

The author also went to considerable length to explain the tradition of voluntarism and the system of philanthropic work in the U.S. and other western countries, including philanthropic projects on behalf of orphaned and handicapped children in China, such as the Half the Sky Foundation and its relief projects in Gaoyou and elsewhere in China. On the surface, there doesn't seem to be a strong connection between these activities and international adoptions, but actually, a bit of rumination would lead one to the realization that the author is using different angles and aspects of the issue to promote the concept of philanthropy, so that orphaned and handicapped children in China may receive more aid and support from a wide variety of philanthropic activities.

Thirdly, the style of writing exemplifies unadorned simplicity. The author uses fluent, down-to-earth language to portray people, events, and

concepts, so that the reader is easily drawn into individual adoptive families to share in their happiness derived from familial bonds. The pace is sprightly and flowing, natural and refreshing, like a clear gurgling mountain brook. While the tone leads the reader to a broad and serene frame of mind, it also jogs the reader to ponder the weighty and profound problem of orphans and handicapped children. As an example, in the section "A moving scene at the Foreign Adoption Registration Service Center," we read:

When the nannies put the babies in the waiting arms of the couple, the twins became alarmed and broke out in a bawl. Thrown into a fluster, the couple were momentarily at a loss as to what to do. But their good preparation for this day gave them a way to quickly regain their composure; out of their bag came cookies and toys to make the babies happy again.

In these few charming but realistic strokes, the author has painted a vivid picture of the babies' frightened reaction to being held by strangers and the new parents' tender love. The simplicity of the writing is precisely what makes the narration realistic and natural. It is easy for the reader to be drawn to the scene and to feel a kinship with the characters in it. This book appeals to readers from all different walks of life. One may be moved by the poignant stories, or rise to a higher understanding of human love, be enlightened by the abundance of materials, or experience a transformation in one's mentality which in turn takes one's compassionate work to a higher level. For those of us in the relevant professions, this book inspires many new ideas on how to foster philanthropic endeavors, how to improve our welfare services for orphaned and handicapped children, and how to provide aid to the powerless and disadvantaged in our society.

There is perhaps no greater basis for the preservation of humankind than the ceaseless nourishment and support provided by love. A world that is lacking in love, or is totally devoid of love, must be a dark and miserable world indeed. All religions, whether Christianity, Buddhism, or Confucianism, regardless of their different tenets, have at their core the principle of love. Christianity espouses "love others as you would yourself"; Buddhism venerates benevolence and mercy; and in the Confucian classics, one reads such teachings as "the kind person loves others" and "extend the care for our own elders to the elders in other families, extend the love for our own children to the children in other families." Adoption across international boundaries is the incontrovertible proof that love can transcend all the extraneous differences - such as space and time, race, and religious beliefs - and enable mankind to show "eternal love."

A year ago, I received as a gift another book written by Ni Wencai entitled *A Story within a Story: Revisiting Gaoyou's Great Floods of 1931 and the Reconstruction of the Grand Canal's Dykes*. This book chronicles the enormous calamities and the ultimate blessings that the great flood of 1931 brought to the people of Gaoyou. Written from a unique point of view, the book is profound and powerful. Now the same author has come out with *Love Across International Boundaries*. These two books on very different subjects, one reexamining a historical event, the other reflecting on a current reality, exhibit the same humanistic approach in rendering concern for the life and wellbeing of the common people. Implicitly and explicitly, love for greater humanity is the theme manifested in both of these works. One cannot help but be awed by the unassuming and sincere humanistic sensibility shown by the high-level cadre who authored these two works. Would that my friend Wencai - with his noble character and heart - continue to produce fine

works like these in the future, and in so doing join in our country's effort to build a harmonious society.¹

(The author of this Preface is a former editor-in-chief of Xinhua Daily, and Chairman of the Board and Party Secretary for the Xinhua Daily Publishing Corporation. Currently, he is a member of the Standing Committee of the Jiangsu Province People's Congress; Vice Chairman of the Subcommittee for Education, Science, Culture, and Health; and Standing Vice Chairman of the Jiangsu Province Journalists Association.)²

¹ The last sentence of the preface is no doubt a nod to the current Chinese political ideology of building a harmonious society. This new ideology emerged in 2005, and the first signal was given by the Chinese President Hu Jintao (http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200506/27/eng20050627_192495.html). Given the somewhat sensitive topic of this book, ending the preface on this note serves the useful function of associating the author and his works with China's current ideology.

² It is Chinese protocol to promote a book by having the preface written by someone with name recognition and status. Listing all of the preface-writer's credentials, past and present, is part of this protocol. While this is not customary in the West, Chinese protocol will be honored in the translation of this Chinese book.

FOREWORD

Our children are our nation in the making; they are the constituency with the greatest potential for progress, and the future and hope of all humanity. Wholesome, high-quality nurturing of our children is a fundamental premise for mankind's progress and sustainable development of society. Therefore, it is only fitting that the care and love for children be the responsibility of every adult citizen.

Orphaned and handicapped children are the most vulnerable component of any society. Preliminary statistics indicate that there are roughly 573,000 minors in China who are officially orphaned or de facto without parental care.¹ These children are subsisting and developing under grim, straitened circumstances. Their tender young spirits are in dire need of love and warmth from parental figures, special concern and support from society, and loving nurture and protection from compassionate souls.

A certain proportion of these children have received aid from and are under the care of our government. They have been assimilated into the "extended families" of the Children's Welfare Institutes founded by local governments at various levels, and are growing up under the loving care of our government and society. Another group of orphaned and handicapped children have been adopted by foreign families. These children are fortunate to have found homes with fathers and mothers of their own.

In the last decade or more, our country's international adoption program for orphaned and handicapped children has been implemented at various sites throughout China. The Gaoyou Children's Welfare Insti-

¹ A document entitled "Proposals for strengthening aid to orphans," issued jointly by fifteen Chinese government agencies on March 29, 2006.

tute, in accordance with regulations of the China Center for Adoption Affairs (CCAA), began participating in this program in 1995. Our experience in the twelve years since the inception of the program has proven that, while the foreign adoptive families are from different countries and have very different cultures and social backgrounds, all of them manifest the love common to mankind that allows familial bonds to transcend international boundaries. Their acts of love and their commitment to nurturing life have written the profoundly moving stories presented to you in this volume.

Ni Wencai

Date

1. INTO THE ARMS OF ADOPTIVE PARENTS FROM ANOTHER WORLD

A moving scene at the Foreign Adoption Registration Service Center

On a clear crisp morning in September of 2006, the main hall at the Jiangsu Provincial Foreign Adoption Registration Service Center seemed a bit deserted. The director of the Gaoyou Children's Welfare Institute (CWI) Wang Fuhai, along with two child-caretakers holding a pair of twin sisters, were waiting to meet a couple from Sweden who had come to China to receive their adopted daughters.

This pair of twin sisters had been abandoned at the gate of a nearby hospital only days after their birth. From there, a kind person had taken them to the Gaoyou CWI, where they were enfolded into that big "family." Under the care of the nannies there, they became plump and fair, sweet and pretty. In the cool late summer morning breeze, they were like two lovely fresh magnolias. They were very good-natured; and would naturally appeal to the tender feelings of anyone who saw them. The CWI gave the twins the charming names of Gao Jinrou and Gao Jinshu.¹ They were now already fourteen months old.

On this day, they were about to be adopted by a foreign family and to have a mother and father of their own – a mother and father from Sweden.

The twin's Swedish mom and dad had finally arrived. For this special day, this couple had dressed themselves up very formally. The tall well-built husband wore a suit with a red necktie; while the wife wore a pink outfit complemented by an elegant silk scarf. The couple looked to be in their mid-thirties. The husband had a gentle dignified demeanor, the wife had a kind embracing smile; both radiating an air of warm graciousness.

Without realizing it, the nannies held the twins closer to their bosoms. They had pitied and cherished these babies, and now their gladness and sense of good fortune for them was mixed with a tinge of bewilderment...

¹ Jinrou and Jinshu literally mean "brocade gentle" and "brocade virtuous."

On seeing their twin daughters for the first time, the Swedish mom and dad were instantaneously flushed with joy. But when the nannies put the babies in the waiting arms of the couple, the twins became alarmed and broke out in a bawl. Thrown into a fluster, the couple were momentarily at a loss as to what to do. But their good preparation for this day gave them a way to quickly regain their composure; out of their bag came cookies and toys to make the babies happy again. When the nannies told them the babies' names, they modeled the sounds with their own English and pronounced them as "roe" and "shoe." Jinrou, with her head on the broad shoulder of her big strong daddy, seemed especially petite and delicate. Then, without warning, she wet her daddy's shirt.² Daddy was not upset in the least, he even held his daughter closer and murmured softly, "Don't be afraid, I'm your daddy, and you are my beautiful little girl, we love you..." Meanwhile, Mommy was holding Jinshu, gently rocking her back and forth, and feeding her a cookie.

Next, they proceeded to take care of formalities related to the adoption. The new adoptive parents needed to fill out forms so that they could apply for passports for the babies to return home. Then the new Swedish mother pulled out a piece of paper, densely scribbled with all the questions that they had meticulously prepared to ask about the babies' everyday habits, such as whether the babies sleep on their tummies or on their backs, whether they sleep with the light on or off, and so on. After all their questions had been answered, the couple finally relaxed. They then took out of their bag three exquisitely wrapped presents that they had prepared for the CWI's director and the two nannies, and expressed their heartfelt thanks for the care that their daughters had received at the institute.

Finally, this new family, the couple and their daughters, took a photo together for the Adoption Registration Service Center to keep in its files. Walking out of the main hall, the family was welcomed into the bright sunlight of a new day. The pair of twin sisters, in the arms of their Swedish mother and father,

² In China, diapers are typically used only with small infants. Babies past infancy as well as toddlers typically wear open-crotch pants and are helped to "go" by their nannies. Naturally "accidents" happen frequently.

embarked on their journey to go home to a foreign land, and to begin their new life there.

Moving scenes like this one are played out here frequently. Every child being adopted is sent off from here; every pair of foreign adoptive parents meet their child here and from here they carry her home.

Children at the Gaoyou Children's Welfare Institute

A portion of the children who go abroad with their adoptive families through the Jiangsu Provincial Foreign Adoption Registration Service Center come from the Gaoyou CWI. This institute is located near the western end of downtown Gaoyou, close to the big Gaoyou Lake and the scenic area on the west bank of the historic Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal. It comprises an area of 14,700 square meters, and has 9040 square meters of floor space. This welfare institute was founded in 1736 (first year of Emperor Qianlong's reign) as the "Infant Foster Care Hall," providing care for 200 indigent children and abandoned infants. In 1931, it was renamed the "Infant Foster Care Institute" and placed under the jurisdiction of the Gaoyou Relief Institute. At the time, it had a staff of eleven and provided care for 70 infants. In January of 1949, the Gaoyou County Government took over the management of the Gaoyou Relief Institute, and a new Institute for the Aged was built. In October 1965, the Gaoyou Children's Care and Education Institute was formally established. It provided care for orphaned and handicapped children³ under the age of 16 from six different prefectures. In 1978, this institute was renamed Gaoyou Children's Welfare Institute. Currently, there are over 200 orphaned and handicapped children at this institute, including some who have become adults.

The majority of the children at the CWI are abandoned infants, and the vast majority of these are female. Why are there so many abandoned infants, and how do they end up in the CWI? This is undeniably a somber topic, one that aggrieves the human soul and afflicts society's conscience.

³ For the purpose of this book, the term "handicapped" includes those born with birth defects or deformities, as well as those with disabilities acquired after birth.

Any new life deserves to be cherished and honored, and yet when these infants came into this world, they did not have a chance to bask under the sunshine of love, perhaps didn't even have a chance to suckle at their mother's breasts, before they were abandoned by the roadside, or in a market or hospital. Anyone witnessing this cannot help but be engulfed by anguish and compassion.

These tiny fragile lives had been on this earth only a few days, or a few months, before they were abandoned by the fathers and mothers who gave birth to them. Some of them were adopted by kind-hearted people, some were sent to the CWI, and some didn't even have a chance to gasp for breath before their feeble cries were extinguished.

Infants who are abandoned generally fall under three different categories. First are infants born with birth defects. Even though China has made tremendous economic advances in recent years, the incidence of birth defects has continued to be quite high, and in fact has even risen within the last decade. One factor contributing to this rise is the rescission of the previously mandatory premarital exams by the central government in 2003.⁴ When faced with the birth of a deformed child, some impoverished families would abandon their own flesh and blood for fear that they cannot afford the expense and time required to treat the child. Thus, the rise in the number of newborns with birth defects has resulted in a higher incidence of infant abandonment.

The second category are female infants. In our contemporary society, there are still people who hold tenaciously to the deep-rooted tradition of favoring males. Under the current one-child policy, some of these people are unable to mediate the contradiction between tradition and the law. Even though the government has strenuously promoted the concept of gender equality, the age-old sexist mentality has not really faded from our society. In some areas, particularly in rural villages, there still exists the common view that "birth of a son brings joy to the whole family; birth of a daughter brings groans and sighs." To the families that pinned their hopes on having a son to carry the family line,

⁴ Premarital physical exams used to be a requirement for obtaining a marriage license in China. But in October 2003, that requirement was rescinded by the government.

a daughter is obviously an unwelcomed obstacle, which then leads to the phenomenon of "keep if it's a boy, discard if it's a girl."

The third category are infants born out of wedlock. In recent times, sexual freedom has become a trend in our society, but sex education remains sorely weak and deficient. The mobile population in urban areas and youths have become the two sectors of our population with the highest incidence of childbirth outside of marriage and infant abandonment. When a couple has a child without a legalized relationship, i.e. through illegal co-habitation and extramarital relationship, they are likely to be afraid of running afoul of the law or exposing some closeted issues, therefore frequently they too would abandon a newborn infant.

Family planning in Gaoyou City has for years been a model in Jiangsu Province as well as the nation, and has been lauded numerous times at the national and provincial levels. In the past ten years, the rate of compliance with family planning has averaged 99.3%, and more than 11,000 persons voluntarily relinquished their right to have a second child due to special consideration for their circumstances.⁵ There are currently 180,000 single-child families in the city, which comprise 69.38% of the total number of families. Among the abandoned infants placed in the Gaoyou CWI, probably only very few had been abandoned by local Gaoyou people; most come from other provinces or towns. According to my understanding, people tend not to abandon their infants locally, mainly because they are afraid of being detected by people around them, or being investigated by government bureaus in charge of family planning or public security. Just as people will go far away if they are having a baby in excess of the legal quota, they will also take an infant far away if they are going to abandon her. Since the facilities at the Gaoyou CWI are better than elsewhere, many believe that their babies would be better cared for here, so Gaoyou has become the first choice for some people in abandoning their infants.

⁵ Permission to have a second child is given to families which meet certain conditions, such as having a first child who is handicapped. The considerations vary depending on location.

Then there are those infants who were brought to the CWI by the "kind-hearted people" who claim to have found them abandoned. Typically, they would say that the infant was found at such and such a place, and they couldn't bear to see her die from cold or hunger, so they brought her to the CWI. This kind of situation really presents a dilemma for the Institute. If the Institute doesn't accept the infant, she could be abandoned a second time. How can anyone seeing a drowning child not run to the rescue?⁶ But if we do accept the infant, it is virtually impossible to find out where she came from, and we could even be providing a loophole for illegal child traffickers.⁷ In the end, the CWI would conduct a detailed inquiry, in some cases even an on-site investigation, or get confirmation from the police department. Then an ad would be posted in the newspaper, so that anyone who has lost that child or who has information concerning the child may come forth. Finally if indeed no one claims the child, then she would be formally accepted into the CWI.

The Children's Welfare Institute and the International Adoption Program

What kind of a program is the International Adoption Program, and how did it come about? What kind of children would be adopted through this program, and by what kind of families? And how many such children have been adopted by foreign families in the years since this program was launched? The answers to these questions are known to only the few who work in this field; hardly anyone else in Gaoyou is aware of the program. This is because "adoption by foreigners" is quite a sensitive issue for the Chinese people. To this day, many people – out of a sense of national self-respect - consider the fostering of orphans to be a nation's internal duty, so how can we allow foreigners to get involved in it? Being the magnificent and civilized nation that we are, how can we begrudge the resources to care for our own orphaned and handicapped children? Some people abroad have even come up with the absurd speculation that

⁶ This is an allusion to a famous Chinese moral tale.

⁷ The author recognizes that child trafficking is a serious problem that deserves public attention, but it is beyond the purview of this book. Interested readers will find the topic well-covered in Western media sources.

China exports its children in order to earn foreign exchange. For these reasons, China's adoption centers have always been very cautious and maintained a low profile with regard to foreign adoptions. For the same reasons, the Gaoyou CWI has not given this matter any publicity. Because I myself have for many years been involved in the civil administration sector of the local government, I have had the opportunity to know about the origin and development of the foreign adoption program.

An environment of family warmth, parental love, and intimate nurturing are necessary for the healthy development of children. A normal family environment, compared with an abnormal one, such as a fragmented or disharmonious family, is obviously more conducive to a child's physical, mental, moral, and particularly emotional growth and development. This is one factor in which no children's welfare institute can hope to match a normal family. From the standpoint of respect and love of individual lives, the act of adoption is a fulfillment of the humanistic concept of "sanctity of life." It plays an important role in safeguarding society's conscience, maintaining social stability, alleviating the burden on welfare institutions, and most importantly, promoting the wholesome development of children.

The adoption of Chinese children by foreigners began in the early 1990's. From its inception the central government took the management of foreign adoptions very seriously. To ensure the smooth implementation and proper development of foreign adoptions, China promulgated two relevant laws – the Adoption Law of the People's Republic of China (1991) and the Implementation Measures on the Adoption of Children by Foreigners in the People's Republic of China (1993). These two laws provided the legal underpinning for foreign adoptions. In 1996, the State Council authorized the Ministry of Civil Affairs to establish an agency for managing the processing of foreign adoptions called the China Center for Adoption Affairs (CCAA). In 1998, the two laws that were promulgated in 1991 and 1993 underwent some revisions. The amendments to the adoption laws were designed to protect the lawful adoptive relationship and to the greatest extent possible safeguard the rights and interests of adopted children.

Through many years of hard work, by June 2006 China had established cooperative international adoption agreements with sixteen foreign countries, involving a total of 172 government departments and adoption agencies. Today, China ranks among the top nations in the world in terms of its laws and management of adoptions.⁸

On January 16, 2002, the then Chinese President Jiang Zemin met with a delegation of the U.S. Congressional Coalition for Adoption led by Senator Mary Landrieu and Congressman Ann Northup. On that occasion, President Jiang made the following statement:

"China actively participates in international exchange and co-operation involving the survival, protection, and development of children, and has established cooperative relationship for international adoptions with 15 countries. Our two countries have done especially well in this area, and have thus advanced the mutual understanding between our two peoples. International adoption is also significant in promoting world peace and development. It is my hope that the relevant government agencies and citizens' groups in our two countries will strengthen their communication and cooperation, so as to do even better in carrying out this meaningful undertaking."

It was against the backdrop of these events at the national level that the Gaoyou CWI began participating in the International Adoption Program. The process is as follows: Our CWI submits a list of adoptable infants – each with such information as her name, photograph, and origin – to the CCAA. The CCAA matches up the adoptable infants submitted by us, along with those submitted by other CWI's around the country, with data on foreign families applying for adoption. Then it sends the data and photos of the selected infants to adoption agencies abroad, which in turn convey this material to would-be adop-

⁸ Above data derived from the website of the China Adoption Center.

tive families. These families then make their selections on the basis of the photos and data they have received. After the selections are approved, the CCAA issues adoption approval notifications to the adoption families. At the same time, notification is sent to relevant personnel at the Gaoyou CWI, and they are instructed to go to the Provincial Foreign Adoption Registration Service Center to deliver the adopted children to the adoptive families and to take care of the registration procedures.

In the twelve years from 1995 to 2006, foreign families from twelve countries have adopted several hundred children from the Gaoyou CWI. They came from the U.S., Canada, England, Spain, France, Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Australia, Norway, and Ireland, of which the highest proportion were from the U.S., with 68.3%; next is Canada with 16%, then come Spain with 3.6%, England with 3.4%, France with 2.7%, and Sweden with 2%.

Why do families in foreign countries adopt children?

With so many children from the Gaoyou CWI adopted by foreign families in the past dozen years, one can wonder why families in foreign countries want to adopt children, and why from China. And what kind of process do they go through in adopting children? Through my American friend Charles Day – whose first adopted child is from Gaoyou - I contacted thirty other families in the U.S. and Canada who have adopted children from Gaoyou, and sent them a questionnaire containing fourteen questions that I had formulated. These families responded with over 100 (!) letters, from which I gained quite a comprehensive and clear understanding of the situation.

Why do people adopt children? This question may seem simple, but in reality it's rather complicated. One major reason is that the rate of infertility in some countries is quite high. In a reporter's interview, the Chairman Mr. Zhong of the American International Ethnic Chinese Children's Service Center gave the following explanation:

"The rate of infertility among married couples in China is 2-4%, in the U.S. that figure is 9-12%, and in Canada it's 12-15%.⁹ Many of these families in foreign countries earnestly hope to have children but are unable to do so. While medical intervention is one way to remedy the problem of infertility, it is extremely costly and there is no guarantee of success. Therefore many people would rather choose to adopt. However, the legal procedures for adoption in the U.S. and other countries are very complicated, the cost is very high (generally in the range of \$20,000-\$50,000), the waiting period could be as long as three to four years, and recently there have been cases where biological parents demanded the return of their children. Because of these various drawbacks, many people have chosen to adopt from overseas."¹⁰

Most of the adoptive families that have corresponded with me had decided to adopt because they were unable to have children of their own. But several others have responded with something like: "We decided to adopt in order to do our part in controlling population growth. In our view, it would be better to adopt one of the world's children who need homes, than to bring an additional child into the world."

Mr. and Mrs. Johnston, both lawyers, are one of the American adoptive couples who responded to my questionnaire. Their response to the question "Why did you want to adopt a child?" was "We adopted our children because we wanted to have a family and we married too late to have biological children." Quite a few other families have said something similar in their letters - that they adopted a daughter because they "wanted to have a family." I was a bit puzzled by this at first. Later on, after I looked into some materials, I realized that the word "family" in the English-speaking world has a somewhat dif-

⁹ Because infertility is difficult to define and the reasons behind the reported infertility rates are complex, these figures should not be accepted at face value. However, data from various sources do indicate that the infertility rate in North America is quite high on relative terms.

¹⁰ http://www.china.com/zh_cn/, December 2003.

ferent connotation from what we Chinese understand by the word "family." In Chinese parlance, a graceful way to say "(a couple) getting married" is "forming a family." So by marrying, the couple automatically and immediately has a family. But in the English-speaking world, marriage only means that a single man and a single woman have become "man and wife," and it's only when this couple has a child that they can be called a "family." Hence, the question "When will you start a family?" in English really means "When are (the two of) you planning to have a child?" So, we think of an adoption as a family providing a home for a child, but to the adoptive families, it's the child who transformed them into a family!

There is another reason why some families adopt a child, and that is because they love children and want to have a big family. An American lady by the name of Janie told me in a letter:

We have been married for 18 years. Eric is a college graduate and works for the United States Department of Labor. I have a Master's Degree in Education...We have two daughters who were born into our family. Brooke is ten years old and Summer is nine years. We always wanted a large family. We have lots of love and we wanted our children to have a large loving family. My pregnancies were very difficult, so we decided to adopt. That's how we ended up adopting Gao Jianjun from Gaoyou in June 2004.

Another American couple, Tim – a civil engineer for the government - and his wife Alice, residents of Washington State, had decided to adopt when they were told that they would probably not have any biological children. So they adopted a girl from Guangdong Province in 2000. But after that, they *did* have biological children, in fact, two of them. Then even after that, they felt that it was in their destiny to adopt another child, so in 2004, they came to Gaoyou to adopt Gao Jianbao. Later on, they also adopted a boy from Vietnam. Now they have five children in the family, so Alice has resigned from her job to become a

full-time mother. In her letter, she wrote these heartfelt words, "As parents, we always hope that our children would have the best possible environment to grow up in, and that we would spend more time with them as they grow up."

In my correspondence with these families, I also discovered that most of the families who have adopted one child want to adopt a second one from China, so that the first child would have a sister, a sister who shares the same ethnicity and cultural heritage. This would not only prevent the loneliness of being the only child, but also there would be more enjoyment in the family, and it would be beneficial to the children's development.

Then there are some unusual cases of adoption for very special reasons. In Tacoma, Washington, there is a professional woman by the name of Jennifer who works as a physician associate in gynecology. She has never been married, and precisely because she was single, she had for a long time planned to adopt a child. Years ago, when she was still in college, she had studied population policies around the world. At that time, she was keenly aware of the limitations in the world's resources and the serious problems that would arise from overpopulation, and began to consider adopting a child eventually. When she was thirty-three, she studied the different adoption laws in the U.S. and in various other countries, and discovered that it is extremely difficult for a single person with a full-time job to adopt an American child. She then considered adopting a child from a foreign country and a different cultural heritage. But the adoption laws in some countries would disqualify her on the ground that she is unmarried. Finally, she chose to adopt from China, and in March 2004, she adopted her daughter Gao Jiancui from Gaoyou.

Another case is Vera Ringer's family. The husband is American, and is a high level manager in a large company. The wife is from Belgium. They have an eighteen-year-old son named Nick, and two daughters – Jade and Maya – both adopted from China. Vera told me in a letter:

We already had a son, but if we could adopt a daughter, we would be very happy. The first time we adopted, we weren't sure which country we should try, but we knew that we didn't

want to adopt in the U.S. The social worker that we were working with suggested that we try China or Korea. At first we considered Mongolia. But at the time Mongolia had just opened up adoptions to foreigners, and we weren't sure how long the wait would be. And in 2001, just as we were ready to adopt, Vietnam closed its door to foreign adoptions. We had heard that China's international adoption process was reliable, and the available children are all healthy. Also, there aren't the problems of alcoholism and drug abuse that exist in other countries. Furthermore, in most cases, the Chinese government does not withhold any information about these children, because they know this information is very important for their proper nurturing. So we came to China in 2003 and adopted our first daughter Gao Fuke from the Gaoyou CWI. Our second daughter was also adopted from China, this time from Suqian¹¹ It's very nice having two children in the family who share the same ethnicity, heritage, and start in life.

In a small town on the banks of the St. John's River in Canada, there is another couple, Ernie and his wife Susann. They have a daughter of their own named Sarah, who is eighteen this year. In 1996, they came to China to adopt a second daughter, the seven-month-old Gao Dongdong from the Gaoyou CWI. Susann told me in a letter that it takes seven to ten years to adopt a child in Canada, but only a little over a year in China, and that's why they chose to adopt from China.

Another adoptive mother named Catherine said in her letter:

I am a professor of American Culture Studies at Emory University, and one of my fields is the literature written by overseas Chinese, especially American Born Chinese. My

¹¹ Suqian is also a town in Jiangsu, in the northwest section of the province.

husband is a poet, and has a love of Chinese poetry and literature. We felt very connected to China, so it seemed logical to adopt from there.

When I checked the list of children adopted by foreigners from the Gaoyou CWI, I discovered that fourteen children with birth defects have been adopted by American families. Five of them had congenital heart disease, two were epileptic, and some had cleft palates, and so on. I was really curious why they wanted to adopt handicapped children, so I tried to contact these families through various channels. In the end, I wasn't able to contact any of them, but I did get some insight from indirect sources.

An American family by the name of Nash told me:

I do not know any families who have adopted disabled children from Gaoyou, but I know several families who have adopted disabled children from China. These families feel that they have the resources to help these children grow into happy independent adults. They can give these children medical care and an education. They love the children, just as you love your children. They do not see a "disable child" they simply see a child who needs a family. All children deserve a family to love them. All of the children that I know are doing great and are happy and well cared for.

Another source of information that I received on this question is Charles Day. In 2004, Charles and his wife adopted a girl from Gaoyou by the name of Gao Jianpu. In 2006, they adopted a handicapped boy from the Shanghai CWI. From Charles, I got this explanation about the process of adopting a handicapped child: Adoption of handicapped children is classified as "special need" adoption. There are probably three rounds of special need adoptions each year. The China Center for Adoption Affairs sends materials on the "special need" children to adoption agencies in various countries. These materials include

photo, medical history, and description of the handicap. Each pair of would-be adoptive parents may choose from among these available children, then submit their application letter along with other documents to the CCAA. They should be able to receive their child in three or four months. When I asked Charles why he and his wife wanted to adopt a handicapped child, his answer was:

This question is the easiest one to answer but the answer is also the most difficult one to understand. We felt that God told us in our hearts to adopt this son. We are Christians, and believe that God has a plan for us, and knows what's best. One consideration in our decision to adopt a special need or partially handicapped child was that the process was faster, and we could receive more information about the child than in other cases. When we saw the photo of this child, we knew that God had already told us in our hearts that this was our son. The challenges that his handicap will bring are immaterial, because he is our son.

Their son's handicap is a cleft palate. He had already had surgery in Shanghai, but still needed follow-up surgery. Also, due to his delayed development, he seems younger than his age peers, and will need many years of special care. But Charles said, "We don't have any worries about this, because we have Jesus' support, and wherever we are, our son will have the best medical care."

Procedures for adoption of Chinese children by foreign families

The Implementation Measures on the Adoption of Children by Foreigners in the People's Republic of China has the following stipulations:

The adoption of children in China by foreigners shall comply with the provisions of the relevant Chinese laws on adoption, as well as the provisions of the relevant laws on adoption of the countries where adopters reside...A foreigner who is to adopt a child in China shall, through the government of the country where he or she resides or an adoption organization delegated by the government of the said country convey an application for adoption and submit the adopter's family situation report and a certificate to an adoption organization delegated by the Chinese government.¹²

My research into the adoption process led me to the conclusion that it is by no means easy for a foreign family to adopt a Chinese child. In the U.S. for example, the would-be adoptive family is first investigated by the county, state, and federal governments. According to regulations in various states, local adoption agencies must send professional social workers to conduct home visitations and interviews, evaluate the applicant's qualifications for adoption, and submit a report on the family's circumstances. The applicant must submit a birth certificate, marital status documentation, income documentation, certification of employment, certification of health, and verification of no criminal record. All these documents and the social worker's family situation report must be notarized. Before these documents are forwarded to China, they must be authenticated by the appropriate Chinese Embassy or Consulate. This extremely rigorous process of investigation that the would-be adoptive families must undergo is designed to ensure that the adopted children will have stable and loving families, so that they will be able to grow up like normal children.

After the adoptive family's application has been approved by the various levels of government in the U.S., the adoption agency forwards all the documents to CCAA in China. If the application is approved, CCAA then refers a child from its list of available adoptees deemed suitable for the particular family,

¹² All citations from China's adoption laws are referenced from the website of the China Center for Adoption Affairs: www.china-ccaa.org.

and sends to the prospective family a "Request for Opinion" along with the child's health examination report and photo. Over 95% of the children available for adoption are female infants. Normally, applicants are not permitted to select the child to adopt, although a request for a certain age range is generally honored. If the applicant accepts the child referred by CCAA, then CCAA will mail out a "Notification to Come to China for Adoption," and the applicant's adoption agency will follow up with arrangements for the applicant to go to China to receive the child. The entire process - from the preparation of the various documents, to waiting for approval, to receiving the child - usually takes about a year and a half.

The adoption process in Canada is quite similar to the above-described process in the U.S. In a small town in Ontario, there is a couple named Robert and Carrie. Robert, age forty, is a truck driver, and Carrie, thirty-eight, is a hairdresser. They were unable to have a child after five years of marriage, so they adopted a daughter by the name of Gao Anzhi from Gaoyou in August 2005. In her letter to me, Carrie said,

Ever since it was confirmed that we cannot have a child of our own, adoption was the natural choice of us. We knew that somewhere, there is a child, or children, waiting for us. After we researched all our options – domestic as well as foreign, we felt ourselves intensely gravitating toward China. We knew then that our child was in China, and that's where we must go.

Carrie told me that the procedures for an international adoption in Canada are very meticulous and take quite a long time. She said,

We must first go through a family investigation. This is done by a government-appointed social worker. She came to our home to interview us, and discussed with us our marriage, our current life as well as our past, our relationship with our family members and friends, our future plans, reasons why we want

to become adoptive parents, and so on. We also had to provide detailed information about our financial situation (by filling out two separate forms for government agencies in Canada and China) and information about our health. We were even fingerprinted as part of a criminal record check. This part of the adoption process usually takes about three to six months. Then we received notification that we passed this first hurdle, and our adoption agency would send a letter to China's CCAA requesting their consideration for our adoption, and submit a proposal to our provincial government seeking their approval. This part took about two months. Then we had the dossier translated into Chinese and sent to China (one month). Once our dossier arrived in China, we got a registration number and started waiting for our case to be reviewed. China's CCAA matched up our situation with an appropriate child, then sent a photo of the child along with other documents to our adoption agency, which immediately emailed us our daughter's photograph. After we accepted the selection, we could finally make arrangements for our trip to receive our daughter in China.

The registration procedures for foreigners coming to China to adopt children include the following stipulations:¹³

1. When foreigners come to China to adopt children, they shall come to China in person to go through the registration formalities. When a foreign couple adopt a child in concert, they shall come together to China to go through the adoption formalities; if one party cannot come to China for some reasons, the other party shall be delegated in writing, and the power of attorney shall be notarized and

¹³ The regulations listed below are excerpted from the "Measures for Registration of Adoption of Children by Foreigners in the People's Republic of China" on the CCAA website: <http://www.china-ccaa.org>. Some of the overly legalistic wording has been edited to make it more readable.

authenticated in the country where they reside.

2. A foreigner who comes to China to adopt a child shall conclude a written adoption agreement with the person placing out the child for adoption.¹⁴ The agreement shall be in three copies, the adopter and the person placing out the child for adoption shall keep one copy each, and the adoption registration organ shall keep one copy.
3. After the written agreement is concluded, the parties involved in the adoptive relationship shall register the adoption with the civil affairs department of the people's government in the locality - the province, autonomous region or municipality directly under the Central Government - where the adoptee's permanent residence is registered. When registering the adoption, the foreign adoptive parents must fill out a registration application for adoption of children by foreigners in China, and submit the "Notice of Coming to China for Adoption of a Child" issued by the CCAA, their identity credentials and photos. After an examination of all the relevant documents by the adoption registration organ has been satisfactorily concluded, the adoption shall be registered for the parties, and an adoption registration certificate be issued. The adoptive relationship shall be established as of the date of registration.

After an adoptive family has gone through a long period of anxious waiting and finally receives a "Notice of Coming to China for Adoption of a Child," they typically can't wait to start packing for their journey and get on that China-bound plane, with their daughter's photo in their vest pocket. En route to China, they are excited and nervous the whole time. Then when they arrive at the Foreign Adoption Registration Service Center, that moment when they see their daughter for the first time is overwhelmingly joyous and will always be remembered. In the words of the Canadian adoptive mother Carrie:

¹⁴ A CWI where an abandoned child has been cared for serves as that "person" in the case of most foreign adoptions.

When I saw my daughter's photo for the first time, I immediately fell in love with her, and couldn't wait to hold her in my arms. When I finally arrived at the Jiangsu Provincial Foreign Adoption Registration Service Center, I was so jumpy with excitement that I couldn't keep my heart from pounding. But our daughter was so frightened when she saw us that she started to cry. My eyes too were filled with tears. I was so happy holding her in my arms, but unfortunately she did not have the same feeling for us! She cried and cried until she fell asleep. Then when she woke up in the hotel and looked around, she saw us and gave us a smile. What an incredibly heart-warming scene! We will never forget that in our entire life.

An American adoptive parent by the name of Janie Nash expressed similar feelings:

It is hard to find the words to describe my feelings when I first saw Lily in person. I was very emotional and overcome with joy. From the very first time that I took her into my arms, she was my daughter. It was an instant bond. I would give my life for her. It was the same feeling that I had when my older daughters were born. I was full of love and wanted to keep her safe and give her a good life. It was a wonderful feeling.

The families coming to China to adopt children generally stay for about a week to arrange their children's passports and visas, and to adapt to each other. Then finally they embark on their journey home. Upon their arrival home, in most cases another moving scene unfolds. As they emerge into the waiting area at the airport, they are immediately surrounded by friends and relatives who have come to welcome them home. Everyone wants to have a turn holding this

newest member of the family from China. Cameras flashing away, camcorders running, people laughing and screaming..., anyone witnessing this outpouring of kindred love can't help but be visibly moved.

As stipulated by China's CCAA, the adoption agency in the foreign country must send two written reports to the CCAA about the adopted child's life and development within the first year after adoption. As explained by China's CCAA, this requirement is a concrete embodiment of the goal of "everything for children," and it is also a necessary measure for the protection of the adopted children's rights and interests. In the process of preparing a post-adoption report, the adoption agency in the foreign country must commission a social worker to do a home visitation with the adoptive family. In the course of the home visitation, the social worker provides the adoptive family with guidance and help. These home visits serve the function of finding out about the adopted child's life and development on the one hand, and on the other hand provide the adoptive family help with any difficulties that they might have encountered, so that the parents and the adopted child can build a loving parent-child relationship and bond with each other. It is only after this round of follow-up work is completed that the entire adoption process can be considered finished.

On the basis of my correspondence with adoptive families, it costs \$15,000-\$25,000 to adopt a child from China, of which half is the expenses of going to China to receive the child, including travel costs (the amount varies depending on the number of people in the family, cities visited, length of their stay, etc.), various processing fees, and a donation of \$3,000 to the CWI. The remaining half is the cost of preparing the various documents and the service fee to the adoptive family's local adoption agency.

Foreign families adopt Chinese children for many different reasons, but the process by which they adopt is similar. All of them must go through a set of complicated procedures, which takes from one to two years, and costs roughly \$20,000 on the average. They come to China from afar - with love in their hearts and a sense of social responsibility - to adopt their daughters. They provide these orphans with new homes, homes that cross boundaries of race, eth-

nicity, family ties, and original destiny. From the perspective of these orphans, though they met with the greatest misfortune in the beginning of their life on earth, yet as has been said by a philosopher, when the God of Fate closes one door, another window of fortune opens up. These children born to misfortune turned out to be fortunate after all. They were blessed with the warmth, care, and love from a foreign land, and their lives were thereby transformed.

2. GROWING UP IN FOREIGN LANDS

In the eleven years from the late 1990s through 2008, nearly 61,000 Chinese children – the vast majority being girls – were adopted by Americans.¹ From the Child Welfare Institute in Gaoyou alone, over six hundred have gone to their new homes in the U.S. and other countries overseas. There's a Chinese saying, "A mother worries when her child travels afar." And so we wonder how these children are faring in foreign lands, and whether their parents truly love and care for them. These are the questions that I most wanted to probe through my correspondence with American and Canadian adoptive families. The answers that I received were both reassuring and touching.

A happy childhood

Of the children adopted from the Gaoyou CWI, the oldest is now twelve, and the youngest ones are just one or two. Based on my correspondence with their American and Canadian families, I find that all the adopted children have settled into very good family environments. The U.S. and Canada are economically advanced, and these families are among the middle and upper-middle classes in these countries, so their children naturally enjoy good living conditions and medical care. They are indeed very fortunate.

Gao Jianjun (English name Lily), adopted by an American family, is now five years old. Her family lives in a house with four bedrooms and two bathrooms. Lily has her own room and bed, and all the clothes and toys that she needs. Her family's home was built only five years ago. It has a very good heating and air-conditioning system, and a large backyard. The family owns two cars. Her mother says: "We can pay for good medical and dental care. We are not wealthy, but we have enough income to take care of our family's needs and have a little fun too."

Another girl by the name of Gao Anzhi (Katie in English), now three years old, was adopted by a Canadian family. Right after she was adopted in the fall of 2005, her parents arranged a complete set of immunizations and a physical checkup for her. Because she had a bronchial infection that winter, she was hospitalized and given thoroughgoing treatment. She was totally cured and never had another recurrence of this problem. She is a very healthy child today. Her mother says that she is a young lady with quite a personality and sense of humor.

The pride that adoptive parents feel for their children is even more evident when responding to my question about how the children are doing in school. If there is one thing that adoptive parents have in common, it's that they adore their Chinese daughters with a passion, and boast about how pretty and smart they are. From the pictures that these families have sent me, I actually couldn't see how some of these children could be considered especially pretty. Perhaps these parents' esthetic sense is different from mine, but they genuinely feel that their children are beautiful.

An American adoptive mother by the name of Susan tells about her daughter in these words:

¹ Data from U.S. State Department. The number of American adoptions peaked at 7903 in 2005, and has since gone on a downward trend.

We have a beautiful daughter, Ruby (Gao Xinbao), adopted from Gaoyou in February 2002. She is an absolutely delightful child and we are very proud parents. She was in excellent health when we met her and is still thriving. She is a gregarious and confident child...She is in her second year at primary school. She is doing very well in all of her subjects and has many friends. She also attends Mandarin classes with a number of other adopted children.

Another adoptive mother by the name of Catherine writes:

We adopted our daughter Violet (Chinese name Gao Jijing) from Gaoyou in October 2000. We've always called her Jingjing at home. Jing is in the first grade, and an excellent student. She gets all A grades in math, reading, writing, social studies and science. She is also learning to play the (Western) flute. She has a wonderful sense of humor, and she is very empathetic, especially to other children.

A Canadian adoptive father by the name of Ernie says of his daughter:

Our daughter Olivia, now age eleven, was adopted from Gaoyou in 1996. Olivia is a very brave and happy child. She is quite talented in music, and is a member of the church choir. She also likes to perform in school. She does well in all her classes in school. On Saturdays she goes to Chinese school to study Chinese and learn to play the *erhu* (a two-string fiddle). She is always eager to learn new things.

I once read a story by a reporter on a Chinese website² about an adoptive family that he met at a Chinese holiday celebration in New Jersey. At this event, the reporter saw a girl from Gaoyou named Ellen performing Chinese dances. In her red Chinese-style dance outfit, hair done up in two braided tufts, and rouged cheeks, Ellen looked just like a schoolgirl in a performance in China. To the accompaniment of Chinese music, little Ellen performed a fan dance and a bamboo hat dance. Ellen was born in 1997 and found abandoned soon after birth. Someone discovered her and took her to the Gaoyou CWI. At age one, her destiny took a dramatic turn. She was adopted by the family and crossed the seas to a faraway land. Her adoptive father Mr. Delnan is a computer engineer. His wife Cynthia was unable to have a baby, so they didn't have any children for quite a few years after they were married. This couple felt all along that their family was incomplete without a child. So Ellen's arrival was a dream come true for her adoptive parents.

During Ellen's performance, her father sat in the audience and watched with rapt attention, encouraging her with applause at every opportunity. As for her mother Cynthia, she stood in a wing of the stage, holding Ellen's little sister Lily in one arm while clapping to keep the beat for Ellen. The reporter learned that the five-year-old Lily was the second Chinese daughter that the Delnan's adopted three years after they had adopted Ellen, this time from Jiangxi. They felt that they should let Ellen have a little sister, so that the two girls could be companions and care for each other in the future. After Lily was adopted, Cynthia resigned from her job and became a full-time Mom to raise their two precious daughters.

² The source for this story is the Chinese website Zhōngguó Yímín Wǎng (China Emigration Web). The names of all the Americans in this story have been transliterated into Chinese in this source, so the English names that appear here are only the translator's best approximations and not necessarily the actual names.

When the reporter asked Mr. Delnan if he was satisfied with his two daughters, his reply was a resounding "Absolutely!" Then he added that adopting their two daughters was the wisest decision that he and his wife had ever made. As he talked about Ellen's performance in school, his eyes sparkled with enthusiasm. With great pride, he told the reporter that Ellen was admitted to the talent class soon after she began elementary school. As a third-grader now, she excels in reading and creative writing. She also especially enjoys drawing. Mr. Delnan says that no matter how busy his work is, he would be home with his two daughters every weekend. In his words, "They deserve to have a carefree happy childhood."

It's never easy to raise a child. We can put a dollar figure on the monetary cost; but that issue aside, the painstaking care that parents bestow on their children cannot be measured in dollars. In response to my question of what reward they receive for all their sacrifices in raising their children, the adoptive parents generally say something like this:

I am rewarded every day. When I come home after a day's work, my child comes to give me a hug and a kiss, and that really makes me feel happy. From watching her grow up day by day, and remembering how little she was when we first brought her home, we get a wonderful feeling of accomplishment.

Almost every family brings up something like:

It's really a blessing for us to have our daughter. She is such a treasure; she brings us so much joy. We cannot imagine what our life would be like without her. We are so grateful to China, so grateful to Gaoyou!

A letter from a "daughter of Gaoyou"

In my correspondence with American and Canadian adoptive families, I was happily surprised with a letter from an adopted child. The letter is so touching that I want to share its entirety with the reader.

Dear Mayor Ni:

My name is Gao Xiaokun and I was born in Gaoyou in 1996. I was adopted in 1999. I know you wanted to correspond with parents, but I want to ask if you would consider me. My e-mail is: ...@yahoo.com.

My mom says I have "Gaoyou blood" in me because I love water and horses so much. I am one of the fastest swimmers on my school swim team. I have been learning how to take good care of horses and soon I hope to learn how to ride horses.

I am in the 4th grade at La Paloma Academy in Tucson, Arizona where my grades are very good. Math and science are my favorite subjects. I also love singing and have sung for lots of small audiences both in China and in America. I like to sing the Chinese popular song "Wo Ai Ni" a lot.

Our family lived in China from 2001 to 2005 (Guizhou and Heilongjiang Provinces). In 2002, I was happy to visit Gaoyou over Spring Festival with my

family and I am always proud to tell people I am from Gaoyou.

Sometimes I have "China moments" where I miss China so, so much. I want to always keep learning Chinese and hope we can visit there many more times. Oh, people say I have a gift for languages, so I want to also learn Russian, Spanish and French.

I have two sisters – Holly, 8 years old, is a Hunan girl and Harmony, 11, is from Fujian Province. My dad is a nurse and my mom works in business. I was the first child in our family. My Grandpa lives just a few doors from us – he is always teaching us something about water because he was a professor of water biology.

Thank you for considering me as one of the possible representatives.

Respectfully,

Gao Xiaokun (which is still my legal name because I love it so!)³

The true feelings of the young writer of the above letter were clearly revealed in her natural straight-from-the-heart wording. From what this letter communicated, we can infer the following: This girl from Gaoyou is leading a very happy life; she is smart, vivacious, and very well-rounded. She has not forgotten China; in fact she is proud to be a "daughter of Gaoyou."

My young friend and I continued to correspond, and we exchanged some photos. I told her some things about Gaoyou, and introduced her to my family and my daughters. I told her that I hoped she and my daughters could write to each other, and also that she would be able to write letters in Chinese some day. To my last suggestion, her response showed absolute confidence:

When I was adopted I was almost 3 years old. I told my parents (through the translator) that I LOVED Chinese and that I would not speak English. I said I would learn English but not speak it. But I did learn English and then I tried to speak English and Chinese together. For instance, I would only say water-"schway", never just water.

Sadly, after my first 8 months in America I did forget all my Chinese. When we went to get my sister Holly, I cried and cried that I had lost my Chinese words. That's one of the reasons that in 2001, my family moved to China to help me learn Chinese again because I loved it so much. I can speak it some and understand it but I cannot yet write or read Chinese very well. But I will keep trying!

What a lovely girl! How proud we are to claim her as a "daughter of Gaoyou"!

A very special photo album

³ Gao Xiaokun also has the English name Haley Marie Buscemi.

Foreign adoptive families care a great deal about collecting memorabilia, and are apt to use photos to document all the bits and pieces of their children's adoption and growing up.

In November of 2006, when my friend Charles came to Gaoyou, a mutual friend by the name of Janie Nash asked him to bring me an exquisite photo album. In the accompanying letter, she wrote:

Dear Mr. Ni,

I made this book for my daughter Lily. She was adopted from Gaoyou in July of 2004. I want her to know much we wanted her to be our daughter. I also want her to know about where she was born. I want her to love China as I do. The book is written for a very young child and I will add more as she grows and can understand more.

We are very grateful to the people of Gaoyou and China, for allowing us to adopt Lily as our daughter, and for giving Lily the chance to have a family who will love and care for her forever.

I would be honored to stay in contact with you.

Once I opened this photo album, I was unable to put it down, and more significantly, I was totally awed by the love that these adoptive parents felt for Lily. The album consists of 22 pages, with a total of 66 photos. Each page includes a paragraph of narrative. The album is divided into four sections. The first section is a general introduction. On the first page are several close-up photos of a baby's precious little mouth, nose, eyes, and feet. Underneath the photos is the following paragraph:

Lily Jane, this is a book about how we became a family. God made you. He made your beautiful face, your cute toes, precious nose, and your strong and sweet spirit. He made you very special. You were born in China. China is an extraordinary and beautiful place. You are a blessing and a joy. Daddy and Mommy love you very much.

The second section documents the family's preparations for adoption. It contains photos of Gaoyou City, the Gaoyou CWI, a baby's crib, the family's departure for their trip to China, and so on. Here are some of the narratives beneath the photos in this section:

In China, the moon rose high in the sky. You had a very special day that was coming soon.

In the city of Gaoyou and the province of Jiangsu, the moon shone through the window of the building where you slept in a room with many other babies. You shared a crib with another baby girl.

The sun rose above Mississippi and all over the country people were getting up. It was a very special day for Mommy, Daddy, Brooke and Summer.

Months earlier we had written a letter to China and asked if we could adopt a baby. We were so happy when China said yes. On May 3, 2004 we saw your

face for the first time. We were totally in love with you. We promised to take care of you and the people in China said that we could come and take you home.

A few weeks later, Daddy, Mommy, Brooke and Summer packed our suitcases with toys, books, diapers, food, and clothes. We flew on several planes for a very long time until we reached Nanjing, China. It was July 4, 2004...We could not wait to hold you in our arms. We were already holding you in our hearts.

The third section is on the actual adoption meeting, and it contains the most pictures, including the family's first meeting with their new child in the main hall of the Jiangsu Foreign Adoption Registration Service Center, the joyful father holding his new child, the tearful mother holding the baby, the first photo of the whole family, photo with the nanny from the Gaoyou CWI, bathing the baby in the hotel, playing with the two older sisters, etc. Each splendid photo captures a wonderful moment. Some of the narratives found beneath the photos are as follows:

The next day July 5, 2004 was the day we had been waiting for. Mommy, Daddy, Brooke and Summer were very excited. Your nannies brought you and your friends from the city of Gaoyou to Nanjing to meet us.

We were so happy to finally get to hold you and look into your sweet face. You were everything that we had dreamed of and more.

We had been waiting and praying for you a very long time. Mommy and Daddy were so glad that God had blessed us with another daughter.

We said good-bye to the nannies. Mommy and Daddy thanked them for taking care of you. You had fallen asleep in Mommy's arms.

We returned to the Jinling hotel. We could not stop looking at you. You had rosy cheeks, beautiful brown eyes, and a perfect little mouth that looked like a rose bud. We were totally in love with you.

The fourth section documents the trip home. In it are photos of Lily playing, drinking milk from a bottle, on the plane, etc. Each one could be said to be a work of art. This section contains the following two narratives:

On the long trip home, you played, slept and ate. It was the end of an amazing journey and the beginning of another one. When we finally landed, Grandma, Grandpa, Uncle Barry, Aunt Cathy, Jamie, Candy, Peyton, Olivia and some other friends were waiting for you with lots of hugs and kisses.

At long last we were home. We held you tightly, kissed you softly, and thanked God for answering our prayers in such a beautiful way. We love you always. We love you to the moon and back. We love you as much as a family can love.

The entire album is infused with the adoptive parents' love, and reflects the glory of hu-

manity at its purist.

The photo album is also a tiny window through which we can get a direct palpable sense of the foreign adoptive parents' extraordinary love and the flourishing happy life of the adopted children overseas.

Liberal education given by adoptive parents to their children

In thinking about the children living in an environment totally different from China, facing such issues as race, nationality, and the status of having been adopted, one can't help but wonder whether they can truly integrate into a foreign family and society, and how they are being educated. This is another area of concern that I wanted to explore.

We already know from that photo album of an adopted child that adoptive parents are open about their children having been adopted. How then do they view the issues of "abandonment" and "adoption"? The most common interpretation that I have heard goes something like this:

It's not that your birth parents didn't love you, it's just that for some reason they were unable to bring you up, so they placed you at a place where you can be easily found. They weren't able to give you all the love you need, but fortuitously we could. So they gave us a precious opportunity to love you.

The adoptive parents realize that abandoning one's own flesh and blood must be an extremely painful act, that it's a very difficult decision that requires a tremendous amount of mental and emotional struggle. When the adoptive parents talk with their children about the birth parents, there is never any disparagement or blame. They can always find some reason to explain the abandonment, such as China's one-child policy and the tradition of gender discrimination.

A single adoptive mother by the name of Jennifer put it this way:

Elena heard her adoption story since she was a baby, and has a book with pictures about her adoption story, called her "Lifebook." She is beginning to understand the concept of being born to another woman, and asks "why couldn't my birth Mommy take care of me?" I say that we don't know any information about her parents; I only know that they had a very difficult decision, and they have missed the opportunity to raise a wonderful girl.

Gao Xiaokun's mother had a different angle on this question:

We have never used the word "abandoned" with any of our children. Instead, we say they were "discovered" at a discovery site, although with Gao Xiao Kun we don't recall any specific place where she was found. She has always known she was adopted - we explain it as a different way to come into a family but just as wonderful as coming through birth.

Another adoptive mother by the name of Catherine tells it this way:

Jing was left at the long-distance bus station in Gaoyou. It was the middle of January, and she was carefully wrapped in two blankets and three quilts to

keep her warm. Telling Jing that helps her understand that her birthmother cared for her, but could not keep her. We talk about her birthmother with great respect.

These testimonies reflect not only a certain art in educating children, but even more so a certain deep-rooted mentality in American culture. They approach this complex world of ours with tolerance, serenity, and goodwill, rather than sowing hatred and cultivating narrow-mindedness. To my mind, this way of thinking is extremely beneficial in the children's upbringing.

While the adoptive parents openly talk about "abandonment" and "adoption," they are very sensitive when it comes to talking about the cost of adoption. An American adoptive mother by the name of Vera told me in a letter:

When it comes to adoption, some people here in America will ask straight forwardly if it is "expensive." ... If a stranger asks me in the street when they see my daughter with me, I will try to ignore it or I will be very direct to let that person know it is not appropriate to ask in front of my child and to ask a stranger such a personal thing. I have several reasons for this. First, if they really want to find out, they can call an agency. Second and very importantly, I do not want my daughter to hear that other people talk about her and how "expensive" it is to adopt. She may think she was "bought." ... (These people) do not deserve a good, polite answer.

This mother is so sensitive and private about the issue of adoption costs, and she is so protective of her daughter's feelings, that we couldn't help but feel the greatest respect and admiration for her instinctive maternal love.

Adopted children's integration into their new environment

I had originally imagined that children going abroad and living in a country with people of a different race would surely encounter some obstacles and discrimination. But the result of my survey showed that I had worried unnecessarily. Both the U.S. and Canada are multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-racial countries, and the adopted children can integrate easily into their local environments.

Vera, an adoptive mother, says:

We live near Atlanta in the State of Georgia. There are many different nationalities here. We live in a community with about eighty-five families, with twelve different nationalities represented. There are families from India, mainland China and Taiwan, also from Japan, England, France, Venezuela, Korea, etc. Our daughter is very well integrated into this community. There are also four other adoptive families in the neighborhood. Their children are from India, Vietnam, and the U.S. itself. So these children have not had any problem with racial discrimination.

Another adoptive mother, Catherine, who is a professor, has done a detailed analysis of this question and has told me the following:

The status of Chinese-Americans in American society is very complicated. They are seen as intelligent, studious, highly motivated to succeed in school and in business. Those are all positive qualities. However, although there have been large numbers of Chinese and Chinese Americans in the United States for 150 years, most Americans still perceive Chinese people as exotic, very traditional, not fully modern. Some scholars call this condition “the perpetual foreigner.” My American Born Chinese students all tell stories about being asked by white or black people “where are you from?” and when they answer with the name of their American birthplace, the questioner will persist in asking until they say “my grandparents are from China.” People will also say “you speak good English,” but of course English is their first language. Slowly, over the generations, I hope that this problem will fade. I believe that friendship and understanding between the people of China and the people of the United States is the best hope for peace around the globe in this new century....So far, my daughters have not been teased about their Chinese ancestry or about being adopted.

Many adoptive parents have mentioned that their children at age five or six begin to notice and ask about racial differences. In school, there are some American kids who will make fun of their eyes, etc. But these parents trust that, with proper education, their children will feel proud of their race, proud of the fact that they are from China. In this way, they will be able to deal with the problems of racial discrimination that may arise in the future.

Extensive communication among adoptive families

The United States has more adopted Chinese orphans than any other country in the world. It is reported that over 80% of the children adopted from China are by American families.⁴ In the U.S., adoptive families have formed an organization called Families with Children from China. This association has a charter, and almost every city has a chapter. They organize several events each year, and the programs are very rich and diverse, including traditional Chinese holiday celebrations, variety performances, group trips, etc. The main purpose is to exchange ideas and experiences in raising their children, to let their children make friends with each other, and to share information and fun. In addition to the activities of this organization, families that have adopted children from the same city also hold gatherings on a regular or irregular basis.

Vera, mother of Gao Fuke, told me that ever since they adopted their daughter in 2003, every year they have a reunion with the other five families that adopted from Gaoyou at the same time. She thinks these reunions are wonderful, and they get more and more interesting as the girls get older. These "Chinese sisters" live far apart from each other, but every year all six families try their best to be at the reunion. The families take turns organizing this annual event. In 2006, the reunion was in Utah, and Vera's family had to take a three-hour flight to get there. The six families rented a lodge together in the mountains. The six Gaoyou girls are very close in age - the oldest is only six weeks older than the youngest. Their names are Jade (Gao Fuke), Kate (Gao Fuzhen), Holly (Gao Fujian), Isabelle (Gao Fufei), Tyler (Gao Fupan), and Lydia (Gao Fukun).⁵ These six families didn't know each other until they came to China to adopt. Now they get together every year. The parents and the children derive a lot of joy

⁴ People's Daily, overseas edition, August 5, 2005.

⁵ It is a traditional practice in China to name siblings with one character in common, and the Gaoyou CWI has extended this practice to the children accepted into the institute each year, as though to recognize them as "sisters."

and gain friendship from these gatherings, and the relationships among them have gradually deepened.

In addition, the Internet is another key channel of communication among adoptive families. Through my correspondence with them, I have learned that an important forum for exchanging information among these families is the International Families website. They often share their experiences, and seek information and help from each other with problems that they have encountered in raising and educating their children. Some American families have even set up a special blog on the web for their adopted children, so as to share with others their joy in raising their children by posting stories and photos of them at each stage of development. There is an adoptive family in Denmark, where the father Ole Strøm Jensen is a construction engineer with an insurance company and the mother Annette is a high school teacher. In July of 1996, they adopted a girl named Gao Xiaoxian from the Gaoyou CWI. In April 2007 the whole family – including a son adopted from Vietnam in March of 1999 - returned to Gaoyou for a visit. They stayed for three days, during which I met with them for about an hour. After returning to Denmark, they created a powerpoint on their observations and reflections about Gaoyou, and posted it on the internet to share with other adoptive families in Denmark.

In Los Angeles, there is another family – John, a drama and English teacher at a public high school, and Ellen, a supervisor at a law firm – who adopted Gao Ancui (now Jemma Ancui) from Gaoyou in September 2005. After taking their daughter home to the U.S., they set up a blog on which they posted a great many pictures. The blog gives details about the process of adopting Gao Ancui, and keeps a monthly log of all the tidbits about her growing up, together with many amusing stories.

This type of communication on the internet has also led to a number of remarkable stories.

On August 23, 2006, there appeared in the *Yangzi Evening News* a reportage by Wan Yan and Yuan Hai entitled "Parents of children adopted separately two years ago discover their karmic linkage through the internet." This was a true story of a pair of twin sisters who were abandoned separately soon after birth and then taken to the Yangzhou CWI; and later were adopted by different American families. Subsequently, through networking on the internet, this pair of twins were miraculously brought back together in America. As it turned out, a couple in Chicago by the name of Funk adopted a girl from the Yangzhou CWI in 2004. They named her Mia. According to staff at the Yangzhou CWI, Mia was abandoned in June 2003 on a sidewalk in front of a textile factory in Yangzhou just hours after she was born. About six months after the Funks adopted Mia, a couple from suburban Miami in Florida by the name of Ramirez adopted another girl from the Yangzhou CWI. Oddly enough, this girl had also been found abandoned at the same spot in front of that textile factory, only this time it was about a week after the first abandoned infant was found.

By sheer luck, Holly Funk, mother of the first girl, discovered a website set up by parents who have adopted children from overseas. She began sharing their adoption experiences with another adoptive couple who had similar experiences. So on this website, Holly became acquainted with the Ramirezes, and found out that they too had adopted a girl from the Yangzhou CWI. Even more uncanny, they also named their daughter Mia. Through their messages to each other and exchange of photos, the two couples were surprised that their daughters were similar in so many ways. So to verify their suspicions, both families took their

daughters in for DNA tests. The result was just as they had suspected, the two girls were actually fraternal twins! Holly exclaimed incredulously, "This is simply unbelievable! What a miracle! They were separated by a thousand miles, but finally they found each other."

Having made this discovery, the Ramirezes decided to take their daughter to Chicago to meet the Funk family. So on August 18, 2006, the two families met for the first time at the Chicago O'Hare airport. The two girls' parents took great care to dress them for the occasion. Both wore the same Chinese style outfit, a white bow tied on top of the head, each holding a fuzzy musical lamb. When Mia Ramirez saw a replica of herself, she whispered to her Mom, "Look! She looks just like me. She's wearing the same dress, and oh, her shoes too." In less than half an hour, the two girls had overcome their initial shyness, and couldn't bear to part with each other. Seeing the pair of happy twin sisters, Mrs. Ramirez murmured to herself, "This must have been ordained by God. What a miracle! God has brought these two girls together again."

On August 20, the Funk's put on a party at their home to celebrate the reunion of this pair of Chinese twins. The two little Mia's each wore a T-shirt printed with the words "Double Blessings," making them look even more like kindred spirits. Although the two families live 1770 miles apart, they resolved to stay in touch. Mrs. Ramirez said, "Even though we are a little far, but as long as we have the desire, we can get together any time." The Funks are planning to visit the Ramirez family in Miami this October. Mrs. Funk said, "Our two families have become like relatives, we're all in the same family. We are planning to let these sisters get to know each other better."

Retaining traditional Chinese culture⁶

Foreign adoptive parents tend to emphasize the importance of retaining the children's Chinese cultural heritage, in daily life as well as in their education. For example, they often cook Chinese food at home. On traditional Chinese holidays such as Chinese New Year (Spring Festival), Dragon Boat Festival, and Mid-Autumn Festival, they would take their children to a nearby Chinatown to celebrate these holidays, or to attend activities organized by their local ethnic Chinese organizations. They also like to buy things with Chinese characteristics to enhance their children's perceptual impression of Chinese culture. They worry that their children might forget about China, so they want their children to learn to speak and write Chinese. Many adoptive parents who have corresponded with me send their children to Chinese school to learn the language on Saturdays or Sundays, some even have their children learn Chinese cultural arts and customs. Some adoptive parents even study Chinese alongside their children.

The parents consider it to be their responsibility to raise the children that they have adopted from China to understand the culture of their motherland. They believe that this kind of cultural immersion is vital for the children to grow and flourish, just as a tree must have roots, for a tree without roots will wither and die sooner or later.

Gao Xiaokun's mother told me that their family has been celebrating Chinese New Year for many years. The best time was when they were in China. This year (2007), they celebrated by cooking Chinese dumplings at home, giving the children New Year's money in tra-

⁶ The primary sources for this section are letters received by the author from a self-selected group of parents who have adopted children from Gaoyou. Therefore, the phenomenon reported here should not be construed to be representative of all families with children adopted from China.

ditional red envelopes, having the girls dress up in new clothes, and watching Chinese movies and Chinese musical programs on television. These days, they send Chinese New Year cards instead of Christmas cards to friends at holiday time. In terms of education, their next goal is for the whole family to learn to speak Chinese. Gao Xiaokun and her sisters also want to learn to read and write Chinese.

Another American adoptive family – the Thompsons – adopted Gao Ru (English name Alana) from Gaoyou in October 1998. Mrs. Thompson said in a letter that her only regret is that their daughter Alana doesn't have a brother or sister. Several years ago she wanted to adopt another child, but because her husband felt that they weren't so young anymore, they ended up not applying for another adoption. Recently they sponsored a high school exchange student from Beijing. This was a wonderful experience for them, for the student was like a big sister to their daughter Alana. They try to include a bit of Chinese culture in their home by using decorations and celebrating Chinese holidays. They are doing their best to teach Alana to be proud of her heritage. She is both American and Chinese, so she has the best of both worlds.

I have a letter from another American adoptive family – the Piersons of Rhode Island - in which they said:

Our daughter Molly is very proud that she was born in China and is eager to learn the language and more about the culture. She has started Mandarin lessons and always asks questions about Chinese traditions. When she is a little older (maybe five or six years old), we hope to spend a year living in China. It is important to us that she really knows what it means to be Chinese, and living in China is the best way for that to happen. We don't know details yet about where we will be living, but I'm sure we'll make it to Gaoyou while we are in the country.

All the adoptive parents who have corresponded with me look forward to a beautiful future for their children. They treat them the same as if they were their own flesh and blood. They give them all their love and nurturing, raise them to become happy useful people, give them a good education, support them in attending college and getting into good careers. They also help their children gain as broad a view of the world as possible, learn to empathize with people, be concerned with and respectful toward others, and become highly cultivated people steeped in knowledge and Chinese tradition.

It has been said that the effects of early education and attitudes formed in early childhood are virtually impossible to change. They are fused into one's bones and merged into one's blood. These children who were originally orphans came to be raised in families filled with love and endowed with favorable environments, educated in an open liberal manner, and immersed in the best elements of Chinese and Western culture. We can say with confidence that they are enjoying a happy life and can look forward to a bright future.

Respect for the children's right to know their origins

In Chinese adoptive families, the issue of adoption is typically treated as a taboo subject. The vast majority of adoptive parents keep the adoption as a deep dark secret, perhaps for their entire lives. They are extremely circumspect in what they say for fear that they might inadvertently let slip some clue to the matter. Some even move to a faraway place so as to

cut off any possibility of rumors. Some adoptive parents would rather take this secret with them to their graves than to let their adopted children unravel the secret.

It is understandable that adoptive parents would want to try their best to evade discussion of their adoption and to take pains to conceal this reality; their motivation is also quite laudable. They don't wish to have their children know that they are different from all the other children around them, or that they were abandoned by their birth parents. Of course what they most dread is that their children might discover that the parents who love them so much turned out not to be their "real" parents after all. Their fear is that somehow that delicate veil might be punctured, thus impairing their parent-child relationship and negatively affecting the child's development. Furthermore, they also don't want to get into any kind of trouble with their child's birth parents, such as financial issues, custody battles or other legal disputes, even to the point of possibly losing the child that they have raised for years.

The attitude of foreigners toward this issue of their children having been adopted is very different from that of the Chinese. Among the fifteen questions in the survey that I conducted with American adoptive families, there was one that reads as follows: "Does your child know that she was adopted? How do you handle this matter which seems to be so sensitive to Chinese people?" The responses that I received were virtually identical: "From the time she was very young, we have always told our daughter that she was not born to us, but was adopted from faraway China." Americans' conception of these matters is very different from ours. They seem to place a premium on respecting people's right to know the truth, so they strive for transparency in dealing with sensitive issues. They feel that their child has the right to know her origins. Why tell the child that she was adopted when she is still so young? It's because the parents believe that even a very young child has the right to know. Furthermore, even if the parents don't tell her, she will find out one of these days. It's better for the child to find out early rather than late; it's better to take initiative to tell the child rather than be forced to tell when caught in an awkward moment; it's better to be open and above board in telling the story clearly than to have the child catch snippets of other people's gossip.

Actually, it is not too difficult to conceal an adoptive relationship within the same race, but is virtually impossible in cross-racial adoptions. After the adopted child grows up, she may speak English like a native, think like an American, be accustomed to eating Western food, and be totally integrated into American society, but her skin color and Chinese face can never be changed.

In researching the subject of adoptions in America, I learned from several in-depth reports⁷ that Americans had taken a tortuous path on adopting foreign orphans in an earlier era.

After the Korean War (1950—1953), the South Korean government agreed to allow American families to adopt Korean children. This was the first time that Americans had attempted to adopt internationally. From that point on until 1998, over 98,000 Korean children were adopted into American families. In the beginning, very few American adoptive parents told their children about their origins as they were growing up. Most of them evaded the truth about the adoption, much like Chinese adoptive parents. But when these children grew up, the vast majority of them became obsessed with the burning questions of "Where did I come from? Who are my birth parents? Why was I abandoned?" and so on.

⁷ 《南方都市报》(Southern Urban News), December 2003 and July 2004, on international adoptions.

There is a study done by the Evan Donaldson Adoption Institute on Korean children adopted by American families from 1955 to 1985. The research found that these adoptees have encountered many problems in life. Many of these Korean orphans were not psychologically prepared to face the realities of their background, so they suffered anguish, disappointment, feeling of inferiority, and some even fell into dissipation. Many of them were perplexed by their status in life, as evidenced by such survey responses as:

I feel as though I'm an imposter. I am not Korean, but I'm also not accepted as a true American.

I'm so different from other people, so I feel very isolated.

Many of the survey respondents had experienced discrimination as they were growing up, but much more so for racial-ethnic reasons than for the fact that they were adopted (70% vs. 28%).⁸

It's not any serious type of discrimination...but little things that happen on a day-to-day basis, like teasing, staring, gossiping, guessing...When these little things add up, they really wear you down.

It's the constant mocking of my racial-ethnic background that left me with painful memories. It happened most frequently in elementary school, but by high school it became more intense.

Some even said that they encountered discrimination in Korea as well as in the U.S.

In Korea I was teased because I could not speak Korean. In America, I was discriminated against because I don't look like a Westerner.

Many respondents in this survey could not understand why their birth parents would abandon them, and they felt a kind of pressure to be grateful for their adoptive parents' love. Some of the adopted children had even wondered if their adoptive parents had gotten them by fraud.

In contrast to the above, the experience of American families adopting children from China has on the whole been very heartening. The parents consider it quite a triumph to be able to adopt a beautiful healthy child from China, and they feel that the child has brought sunshine and joy to the family. But we might ask, how do the children themselves feel? Will they be like the Korean adopted children and become deeply troubled about their origins by the time they are grown? In light of the hard lesson from past experience, American families adopting Chinese orphans have changed their tack. They are now letting their children know their origins from early on, so as to preempt difficulties in the future. One can't help but see this as the radiant manifestation of human nature at its best.

The truth is, experience from the past several years indicates that adopted Chinese children growing up in American families *do* become perplexed with questions about their background. The first question that comes up is "who gave birth to me?" As they get older and begin to understand some things, they would ask "why was I abandoned?" These questions

⁸ In the past half century, racial attitudes in the U.S. have greatly changed. The differences between the Korean adoptees' experience with discrimination and that of the more recent Chinese adoptees are mostly attributable to changing attitudes in American society.

have to do with the child's self-identity. A survey done by the American Adoption Congress found that 72% of adopted children want to know why they were adopted, 65% would like to meet their birth parents, and 94% would like to know what their birth parents look like.

A while back, I read the following story in the "Life Overseas" section of the Xinhua News website (23 December 2004): When a girl named Nora was seven years old, she said to her mother, "You know Mom, when people say we don't look alike, it really makes me feel bad." Nora said that she often dreamt about her birth parents, but she could not see their faces clearly in her dreams. She even fantasized that she might have one or two sisters living somewhere in China. Her family doctor feels that there is an "empty hole" somewhere deep in Nora's soul. Another girl by the name of Sarah, who was adopted from the Nanjing CWI by an American family, wrote a letter to her birth mother in 2000. She sent this letter to the Nanjing CWI via the internet. In this letter, she wrote:

Mom, I really miss you. Although I cannot imagine what you look like, I believe you must be a kind and intelligent person. I would like to know how you are doing. Where are you? If I knew where you are, I would come see you, and give you hugs and kisses. If I cannot find you, I will have this regret all my life. Are you in heaven, or still living on earth? I love you more than anything else in the whole world.

American adoptive parents are aware that every child goes through a rebellious period during the teen years, and in the case of adopted children, perplexity over their background may be one manifestation of this "rebelliousness." They realize that their children may need psychological help getting through this stage. When the children are still young, this kind of problem is not very prominent, but when they grow older and become aware that their birth parents are lost to them, they may experience a lot of pain. Under these circumstances, the best way to treat this kind of psychological problem is to know and experience China first-hand. Jane Liedtke, Director of Our Chinese Daughters Foundation, explains it this way:

When a Chinese child living in the U.S. looks into a mirror and sees a Chinese face, but sees that her parents have a skin color different from her own, she would naturally wonder: What is my native land like? Is China like what I see on television? The best way to answer such questions is to take her to China to have a first-hand look, to live in China, and to learn about Chinese traditions. That knot of doubts in their hearts can be unraveled only when they understand the realities of China, and only then will they come to understand and accept the reality of their having been abandoned.⁹

With their noble selfless love, adoptive parents have given their children considerable self-confidence and strength in overcoming their special problems, but due to various external and internal factors, these families still have some difficulty integrating into society at large. Love needs to be extended beyond the immediate family; and these children need to find their roots. For these very reasons, CWI's across China have hosted many groups of adoptive families returning to visit.

An adoptive mother named Catherine shared her reflections about a return visit in these

⁹ "Taking Our Chinese Daughters to Search for Their Roots," [《带中国女儿们寻根》] written by reporter Peichun Li based on an interview with Jane Liedtke. Published in the Chinese language newspaper *World News Journal* (published in Beijing), 11 February 2004.

words:

We were able to visit Gaoyou City in April of 2003, when we came to China to adopt our second daughter. We were not given permission to come inside the CWI, but we were allowed to stand outside the gates and talk to some of the older children and the “*ayis*” (caregivers). Also, we attracted quite a crowd of local people... Many people remembered Jingjing, recalling that she was “an easy baby” and that she smiled a lot. Jingjing was three years old at the time, and this visit meant a lot to her. She often speaks of missing all her *ayis*, and treasures the photo of the *ayi* who brought her to us in Nanjing. We only stayed for the day, but we did get to eat the famous Gaoyou double-yolk duck eggs. Gaoyou seemed like a wonderful city. At that time, the SARS outbreak was at its peak, and our guides restricted our travel and tourism. We hope we can come back someday.

Several adoptive parents have told me in their letters that it's essential for their children to form a positive view of their native country and of the fact that they were adopted. Their thoughts on this can be represented by what Jane Liedtke said in the interview cited above:

When children return to China when they are four or five years old, their feeling about the trip is like taking a summer vacation. It's a lot of fun for them; they form some primal impressions of China, and they learn that China is a place that really exists. In their eyes, everything about China is wonderful. A trip like this creates in their minds the notion that China is a fun place that they would like to revisit again. Then if they return to China when they are seven or eight – an age at which they are beginning to analyze things, they may discover that China is fraught with serious problems of environmental pollution, traffic congestion, etc., but they would still have good feelings toward China.

Many adoptive parents feel that it's very important to revisit the CWIs from which their children were adopted, and for the children to know the milieus in which they were abandoned and then adopted. This way, the children will come to understand their own backgrounds. They want to take their children to revisit the CWIs, first to thank the CWIs for accepting them in the first place and to thank the nannies who had taken care of them, and secondly to let them form a realistic image of the CWIs. From the children's point of view, the impressions they get of the CWIs may not necessarily be positive, but hopefully they will at least no longer have to keep wondering what the CWIs are like, and they will know that the terrible things that they might have heard about the CWIs are simply not true. The main purpose of revisiting the CWIs is to let the children personally go through this essential process.

Some American parents say they want to tell their children that China is still a developing country with a huge population, and their birth parents may have had to abandon them for no reason other than the population policy or economic pressure. They realize that the older the children get, the more serious their questions will be. So the best way to prepare for the future is to take them back to China while they are young, to let them learn about China and about their roots and Chinese culture, and to help them cultivate interest and curiosity about China. This way, by the time they get older and start asking such serious questions as “why was I abandoned,” they will be able to analyze the situation rationally and arrive at an explanation such as: “I have visited families in rural China, and I know what their living conditions are like. Most probably my birth parents had to give me up because they couldn't afford

to raise me."

There are also some adoptive parents who have told me the following: For a child growing up in a multi-cultural environment, to be cut off from her original culture is quite detrimental to her character development. Therefore we want to help her develop affectionate feelings for China. China is a beautiful country with a long history and rich cultural heritage. We want our child to understand Chinese culture and traditions, especially the culture and traditions of her birthplace. Her roots are in China. We want her to not only be proud of China, but also be proud of herself for having come from China.

I have asked American adoptive parents how they would feel if their children want to go search for their birth parents in China after they grow up. The truth is, these parents know that it is extremely difficult to find the birth parents. When an abandoned child is brought to a CWI, all the things left with the child are bundled up and kept at the CWI. But over 99% of the birth parents, in abandoning their children, want to have them be adopted, so their hope is that they will never see their children again. So the records at the CWI basically contain no clues about birth parents.¹⁰ To search for clues after some years have passed would be more difficult than ever. Knowing all this, the adoptive parents nevertheless have the following answer to my question: All we can do is to respect her decision. Right now, all we hope to do is to let her birth parents know that she is enjoying a good life in America, and that we love her very much.

My daughter, who is studying at the Hopkins-Nanjing Center for Chinese and American Studies, borrowed an American video called "China's Lost Girls" for me to see. This is a documentary about the process that American families go through when they adopt orphans from China. It also includes an investigation and objective analysis of the issue of infant abandonment in China. In this video, there is a series of photos that left me with a particularly deep impression. The photos tell the story of an American adoptive family who came with a group to visit China. On their last day before departure, the adoptive mother posted a notice on a bulletin board in a park in Nanchang (Jiangxi province), near where her daughter had been abandoned. The notice included two photos of her daughter, one from the time she was small, the other is a current photo. Under the photos were these words written in Chinese: "The girl in these photos was found at this spot on November 16, 1999. She is now living with her new parents in America. She is in good health, and living a happy life." The video also showed the scene of many Chinese stopping to gawk at this notice and sounding off their opinions. Without a doubt, this notice was posted with the best intentions, and it was actually posted specifically for the child's birth parents to see. It demonstrates the adoptive mother's hope that the parents who abandoned the child would see this notice and be reassured that their child is doing fine and thus be comforted in their hearts.

Are they really not afraid that their children's birth parents would come to look for them? I believe what Janie Nash said to me in a letter reflects the genuine mindset of the vast majority of adoptive parents. What Janie said was this:

I pray that my daughter Lily's birth parents know that she is safe and that we love her deeply. We would be happy to have them know her whereabouts. After Lily grows up, if there is a way to find her birth parents and Lily wants to look for them, I will support her decision. Lily is my daughter, she always

¹⁰ Child abandonment is a serious crime in China, so it stands to reason that birth parents will want to cover their tracks when they abandon their children.

will be, and this will not change even if she finds her birth parents.

But I have also found that a few American adoptive parents do have misgivings about the possibility of being contacted by their children's birth parents. Charles reminded me in a letter that if I use the content of my correspondence with the adoptive families in writing this book, I must seek their permission first. The reason is that some parents are afraid that their child's birth parents might discover some clues to finding their way to their child and then bring on trouble. Most adoptive parents were willing to correspond with me, but a few of them were quite brief in their answers to my survey questions, as though they didn't wish to provide too much information. Their attitude in this matter is one that I can understand perfectly.

3. YOUR HOMETOWN WILL ALWAYS BE IN OUR HEARTS

Return visit to Gaoyou by the Day family

At 9:30 in the morning of November 23, 2006, amidst a fine drizzly rain, the Gaoyou Children's Welfare Institute (CWI) welcomed a family of special guests: Charles and Leslie Day, Leslie's mother, and their little girl Sarah. The interpreter announced that they were the three generations of a family who have come to pay a return visit to the Gaoyou CWI.

Sarah was found abandoned at the Gaoyou Zhongshikou Market on February 18, 2003, shortly after she was born. The Gaoyou CWI took her in, and named her Gao Jianpu. In March of 2004, Charles and his wife Leslie came to China to receive their little girl, and renamed her Sarah Jian Day. On this day, little Sarah's adoptive parents had brought her back to the CWI so that she could see the place that had given her a home in the very beginning, and visit the nannies who had nurtured her in her first year of life.

Several days ago, the CWI had received a memo from the Provincial Foreign Adoption Registration Service Center notifying them of the upcoming return visit of the adoptive family. The staff at the CWI made painstaking preparations, and hung in the reception room a horizontal banner that read "Warmly Welcome Charles Family Visit Our SWI."¹ The Day family walked among the children at the Institute, chatted with them, and took photographs with them. Little Sarah happily distributed candy to her new friends. Seeing how Sarah had grown since she left the Institute and what a happy life she now enjoyed, the nanny who had taken care of her as an infant was so overjoyed that she swept Sarah into her arms. While vivid memories of baby Sarah flooded her mind, she marveled at the huge transformation that had taken place in such a young life, and tears welled up in her eyes. Comrades at the Institute had put much heart into preparing for this occasion. They presented Charles and Leslie with all the

¹ The CWI (Child Welfare Institute, 儿童福利院) in Gaoyou is actually one part of the SWI (Social Welfare Institute 社会福利院). The latter term is broader, as it encompasses services to other age groups. The wording on the banner was not quite in grammatical English, but the meaning was clear.

photos of Sarah from her days at the Institute which they had carefully assembled. These photos portrayed Sarah's starting point, an all-important chapter in her life. Charles and Leslie were overjoyed upon receiving this priceless treasure!

Charles delivered a detailed account of Sarah's development to the Institute's Director Wang, and repeatedly thanked the Institute for allowing his family to have such a lovely daughter and for all the love and care bestowed on Sarah by the Institute's nannies. Director Wang described the daily life and education of the children in the Institute, and expressed the hope that Charles and Leslie will bring Sarah "home" often to see her extended "family." Charles and Leslie brought gifts for the children, donated ¥1500 to the Institute, and brought another \$100 donated by Leslie's younger sister. Finally, photos were taken of the Day family with the leaders and nannies of the Institute. This visit lasted over two hours; every minute filled with warm affectionate feelings.

Getting to know Charles

Why did Charles and his wife want to bring their daughter back to Gaoyou for a visit? What kind of a person is Charles?

I first learned about Charles from an American friend named Steve. It was Steve who told me that Charles had created a website about Gaoyou, which had all kinds of information useful for visitors. From this website, Steve found out about all the interesting tourist sites in Gaoyou, where one could buy a map of Gaoyou, and even how much it cost, etc. At the time, I was astounded.

Charles Day was born in a small town in Montana on June 20, 1961. He grew up there and attended the local schools until he was seventeen. After that, he studied electronics at a technical school in Arizona. In 1990, he began working for a large air conditioning company in California, installing residential and commercial air conditioning systems. Because he was exceptionally hard-working, his salary and rank rose quickly within the company. Currently he is the manager of the residential department of another company, with re-

sponsibility for the sale and installation of air conditioning systems with an annual revenue of \$2,000,000.

Charles and his family now live in Seattle. His wife Leslie was born in 1964. Leslie's first career was as an officer in the US Air Force working as a Systems Analyst. Currently she is employed by an American heavy truck manufacturing company as an Inventory Analyst. Charles and Leslie were married in 1998, but they did not have any children over the ensuing several years. Therefore in March of 2004 they adopted a daughter by the name of Jianpu Gao (English name Sarah) from the Gaoyou CWI. At that time, coming to Gaoyou was not an option for them, and therefore they received Sarah in Nanjing.

After returning to the U.S., Charles became more and more interested in knowing what kind of place Gaoyou was, but he was unable to find any useful information. In April 2005, he had an opportunity to visit Gaoyou with the Half the Sky Foundation, and he was thus able to do a week's volunteer work at the Gaoyou CWI. Within those few days, he worked from early morning until late at night, going everywhere, interviewing all sorts of people, taking many many photos, and gathered a large amount of material. After returning to the U.S., Charles created an English website on Gaoyou from the material that he had collected on his visit there (www.aboutgaoyou.com) and produced a corresponding pictorial guidebook.²

Initially, some of the information about Gaoyou on this website was lacking in detail and accuracy, but Charles worked assiduously to remedy its shortcomings. Through our mutual friend Steve, Charles was able to make contact with my daughter Ni Dehui. Within a year, they exchanged more than twenty letters. In his letters, Charles repeatedly sought clarification on the history of Gaoyou, such as facts concerning the Yucheng Post,³ the Wenyou Terrace,⁴ and the Jingtū Temple Pagoda.⁵ Charles had searched the website of

² The title of this book is *The AboutGaoyou.com Guide to Gaoyou City*, out of print but downloadable from the website.

³ This place name can be translated as "Yu City Courier Station," a way station in the ancient postal system, comparable to a post on the Pony Express in the U.S.

⁴ Translated as Literati Roaming Terrace.

⁵ "Jingtū" means "Pure Land," which is the name of an important Buddhist sect.

the Gaoyou municipal government, and found an account of the Jingtū Temple. He used a translation computer program to render it into English, but the result was incoherent and unintelligible. In his letter seeking clarification, he said: "This story sounds very interesting, but the translation is too rough to be comprehensible. Would you please revise it, and tell me what 'jingtū' means?" He also asked many other questions, such as why had Marco Polo come to Gaoyou. To all of his questions, my daughter Dehui responded in great detail.

In the midst of all this, there was something else that was amusing. Charles mentioned in a letter, "I have a question that I'd like to seek your advice on. We are now trying to toilet train our daughter. I remember when we adopted her - she was a year old at the time - her nanny would have to whistle before Sarah would pee. I'm curious to know what the traditional age is for toilet training in China. Are there other techniques, such as whistling, that adoptive parents should know to help us toilet train our kids?" In her reply, Dehui said, "This is really an interesting question. I never even considered it to be a question. Because I have no personal experience with this, I'm not qualified to answer your question, but I asked my mother to help me with this. Here's what she told me: Early on, when the child is too young to sit or stand, whistling while holding the child in the squat position is the typical way the Chinese help her pee. In this way, she gets used to the "sh...sh..." whistling sound. After she's older, you can use this familiar sound to help her learn to use the toilet. When she's sitting on the toilet, maybe this whistling sound would help her recall that it's a signal to pee. I hope this is of help. I can only imagine your situation, perhaps the real-life situation is much more complicated."

Later on, the questions that Charles asked Dehui became more and more professional, such as "What do you think our daughter should know about China, and about Gaoyou? How did your own parents help you learn about Gaoyou, and inculcate in you a sense of pride in your hometown?" Questions such as these that involved the education of children went beyond what Dehui was able to handle with confidence. So it was then that I started having direct contact with Charles.

Through corresponding with Charles, I learned that many American fami-

lies that have adopted children from Gaoyou would like to know more about this place. Many of these children may encounter certain problems as they grow up, and their parents hope that folks from their children's hometown might provide some suggestions.

In 2006, Charles and Leslie wanted to let Sarah have a sibling, so they decided to adopt another child. After they applied for another adoption, the Chinese Adoption Center agreed to let them adopt a handicapped boy from the Shanghai CWI. They wanted to take advantage of their trip to receive their son to make another visit to Gaoyou. In his letter to me, Charles said, "My wife and I are looking forward to revisiting Gaoyou, so that our daughter Sarah can see her place of birth again. We are proud of our daughter's heritage, and hope to gradually instill the same kind of pride in her as she matures. I have discovered that many parents who have adopted children from Gaoyou share this same goal. As you know, I've been sharing Gaoyou's history and culture with other Gaoyou adoption families through building the website and writing a book. During our visit, I hope to collect more information, so that I would have even more to share with Gaoyou adoptive families. As someone from a town with less than 200 years of history, I find Gaoyou to be a city with a fascinating history of over 2000 years, so I would like to understand even more. I would also like to let people know about modern Gaoyou, and to publicize the various tourist spots in Gaoyou, so that Our Chinese Daughters Foundation (OCDF) and myself can better help other people have more information about visiting your city."

The Day family's return visit to Gaoyou was arranged through the OCDF. This foundation is an international non-profit organization set up in Beijing to help foreign families who have adopted Chinese orphans. Each year, this foundation receives several hundred adoptive families from the U.S., Canada and Europe, makes arrangements for their visits in China, and helps them understand China's history and current state of affairs. According to Chinese legislation, foreign adoptive families returning for a visit must submit an application to the corresponding Provincial Foreign Adoption Registration Service Center, which includes such information as the name, gender, date of birth, and date of

adoption of the adopted child, family members returning for a visit, nationality, contact information, time of return visit, travel agency and accompanying persons, purpose and special requests of the return visit. Moreover, they must also obtain the approval of the local welfare organization. Before October 31, 2006, Charles submitted an application through the OCDF to the Jiangsu Provincial Foreign Adoption Registration Service Center for a return visit to the Gaoyou CWI. After following through on all the relevant procedures, his application was approved. On November 22, 2006, the Day family arrived from Nanjing, and began their long-awaited visit to Gaoyou.

Charles and Leslie had planned a three-day itinerary in Gaoyou.⁶ I prepared for them a commemorative stamp album called "New Gaoyou New Span," with explanations in both Chinese and English, a copy of "An Investment Guide to Gaoyou," and some CD's such as "Stepping into Gaoyou" and "Songs of Gaoyou." I also spent a day and a half taking them to see the Longqiu Archeological Site, Wenyong Terrace, Jingtou Temple Pagoda, Kuixing Pavilion, Yucheng Post, Gaoyou Lake, Zhenguo Temple and Pagoda, Han Dynasty Tombs at Tianshan, and the mosque at Lingtang. We also visited the Garment City,⁷ Bosideng⁸ Production Base, and so on. The timing of the visit was perfect, as my daughter was on vacation from college, so she came home from Nanjing to be our interpreter. Everywhere we went, Charles was full of enthusiasm as he looked at everything, asked all kinds of questions, photographed, and videotaped. He was busy non-stop and enjoyed every moment. Charles and his wife also spent a good part of a day roaming the streets and lanes of Gaoyou, experiencing first-hand the daily life of ordinary citizens and absorbing the local ambiance and customs. He summed up this trip with these words: "This trip to Gaoyou has been a tremendously worthwhile. We gained a much deeper insight into this city, acquired more material for publicizing

⁶ The return visit to the Gaoyou CWI by the whole Day family recounted in the first section of this chapter took place in the morning of their first day of this 2006 trip to Gaoyou. April 2005 was Charles' first trip to Gaoyou. He came with the Half the Sky Foundation, but without his family.

⁷ A wholesale garment market.

⁸ A brand of down garments well-known in China.

Gaoyou, and now have much more confidence in educating our daughter." Charles also came up with a new plan. After returning to the U.S., he would not only update his Gaoyou website, but also produce a DVD about Gaoyou, so that other adoptive families could understand Gaoyou directly through an audiovisual medium. (Note: By the time this book was submitted to the publisher in October of this year, Charles had already updated his website.)

In June of 2007, Charles wrote to tell me that there was a new travel website called "wikitravel.org" in the U.S. and that he had created a webpage about Gaoyou on that website. If you go on the webpage <http://wikitravel.org/en/gaoyou>, you will find detailed information about Gaoyou's history and current situation, tourist sites, transportation, lodging, shopping, etc. We really have Charles to thank for giving Gaoyou so much publicity.

Building the English Gaoyou Website

The website www.aboutgaoyou.com was created by Charles after his visit to Gaoyou in April of 2005.⁹ One cannot help but be surprised that an American would create a website about Gaoyou. So naturally I was curious. Why did Charles want to create such a website and produce a corresponding pictorial guidebook? What sort of information would appear on the website? And what effects would be generated by all the available information? With these questions in mind, I logged on to that website numerous times, and read the entire contents. The contents of the guidebook are basically the same as what's available on the website. I then translated the more essential portions into Chinese. In this process, it struck me that Charles has profound sentiments for his daughter's hometown, and that he has put a tremendous amount of arduous effort into the website and guidebook. He saw Gaoyou from a unique humanistic perspective, and has communicated this perspective to his audience. The web-

⁹ This website is not to be confused with the aforementioned webpage on Gaoyou that Charles put on the website wikitravel.org in 2007. April 2005 was Charles Day's first trip to Gaoyou. A detailed description of his second trip (first one with his family in tow) was given earlier in this chapter.

site and the guidebook are of great significance and are bound to make an important impact.

In the preface to the guidebook, Charles writes:

When we decided to adopt from China, and even when we traveled for the adoption, I knew next to nothing about the history of China. The significance of much of what I saw at the standard tourist stops (Forbidden City, etc.) did not really sink in. Since our return, I have tried to learn something of our daughter's heritage, and have found myself becoming more and more proud of the long history and great accomplishments of her people.

He ends the preface with these words:

My hope is that families that have adopted children from Gaoyou can use the information presented here to get a better understanding of their children's heritage. I also hope that this book will encourage readers to visit Gaoyou, and will help them get more out of their time there.

On the homepage of Charles' website is a photo of the statue "On the Road to the Postal Station." Above are the words "Gaoyou City" in Chinese and English. On the left, there are eight tabs, as follows: Gaoyou Map (clicking on certain points on the map will bring up the corresponding place names and photos); Gaoyou City (including impressions of Gaoyou, Gaoyou double-yolk duck eggs, travel guide, etc.); Gaoyou History (including narratives about various sites such as Yucheng Post, Grand Canal, Jingtū Temple, Kuixing Pavilion, Zhenguo Temple, Longqiu Village, Wenyō Terrace, and the Wang Family Memorial Hall); Photos (including photos of Gaoyou's archetypal emblem, people of Gaoyou, Gaoyou environment, Hongsheng Hotel, Gaoyou Lake, etc.);

Gaoyou Children's Welfare Institute (photos and narrative); Finding Sites¹⁰ (photos of places where abandoned infants are frequently found, such as People's Hospital, Long Distance Bus Station, Markets, People's Park, and Grand Canal Embankment); Resource Center (Guide to Gaoyou, link to the Chinese Gaoyou website, Chinese reference works, explanation of translated terms, etc.); Appendix (narrative about his daughter Sarah and his own blogs). The pictorial guidebook is a byproduct of the website, so the content is basically the same as what is found on the website. It is 8.5 by 11 inches, 88 pages, and approximately 50,000 words. There are 133 color and 31 B&W photos, plus two full color maps. According to Charles, the photos were handpicked from an original collection of 1600!

This is Charles' account of Gaoyou's history:

Settlements have been documented as existing at Gaoyou for over 7000 years. At the site of the Longqiu Cultural Relics in Longqiu Village, north of Gaoyou City, lies a significant archeological find. There, much has been uncovered to document an ancient village on the site. At Longqiu, painted pottery shards and other artifacts point to an advanced culture. Also significant are carbonized rice grains that establish the cultivation of rice in the area at this early time.

The first section of what was to become the Grand Canal was constructed in 486 BC through present day Gaoyou. The canal has gone through many cycles of building, use, disrepair, and rebuilding over the centuries. It has been a significant factor in the development of China.

Around 223 BC a "Post Pavilion" was established at the site, which gave Gaoyou its name. The Pavilion provided the riders of the early postal services a place to rest and change

¹⁰ The term "finding sites" is used in both the website and the guidebook, but the author of this book refers to these sites as "infant abandonment sites." This discrepancy reflects a difference in focus on the recovery of abandoned infants.

horses as they traversed the country delivering the mail. The Post House stayed in operation until the Chinese revolution in 1911.

In AD 605, Emperor Yangdi started a massive 5-year project to rebuild and lengthen the Grand Canal. Although the cost of this massive undertaking, and resulting loss of life eventually ended Emperor Yangdi's Sui Dynasty, the completed Grand Canal set the stage for the Tang Dynasty to be one of China's strongest. There was also renewed growth at the post station around these times.

In 1275, Marco Polo traveled to China, together with his father Nicolo and his uncle Maffeo. The Emperor Kublai Khan took to Marco Polo, with his obvious intelligence and ability to learn the Mongolian language. The Emperor invited Marco to live in China, and sent him to travel and inspect parts of his empire.

From 1282-1287, Marco Polo traveled to inspect the famous city of Yangzhou on the Grand Canal, northeast of Nanjing. His travels took him from Beijing (the capital) through Tunzhou, Xuzhou, Huai'an, Baoying, Gaoyou, Yangzhou, Zhenjiang, Suzhou, Hangzhou, Fuzhou and Quanzhou.

Marco Polo spoke of Gaoyou in his book, saying, "Gaoyou is very big and prosperous. People live mainly on trade and handicraft business. Living necessities are abundant, especially the fish. There are so many wild animals and birds that it only costs one Venetian coin for three pheasants, each is as big as a peacock."

Several notable figures in Chinese culture and history are associated with Gaoyou. Among them are Qin Shaoyou, a well-known poet of the Song Dynasty; Wang Niansun and Wang Yinshi (father and son), celebrated classics interpreters during the Qing Dynasty; Sun Yunzhu, the modern paleontolo-

gist; and Wang Chenqi, the contemporary writer.

The Jiangsu Provincial Government has designated Gaoyou as one of the province's famous historic and cultural cities. With the city's long, rich history, beautiful scenery and 59 key state historic preservation sites it is easy to see why.

In these several succinct paragraphs, Charles has basically captured the essential history of Gaoyou. He has obviously researched a large amount of reference materials, and invested a great deal of time and effort in the task.

Something else that's even more remarkable about this website is the prominent presentation about the double-yolk duck eggs, a specialty of Gaoyou. This is how Charles describes them:

Gaoyou County is renowned for its salted duck eggs with double yolks. We were served the eggs as an appetizer during a formal dinner we attended with the Mayor of Gaoyou. They are quite salty but good, and sure enough they each had two red yolks. Flying out of Nanjing, I noticed a gift shop at the airport that had a display of the eggs in gift boxes, so they do seem to be one of Gaoyou's most noted exports.

Gaoyou County enjoys abundant water resources, which have allowed the cultivation of aquatic plants and egg products. The Gaoyou ducks, together with Beijing and Shaoxing ducks, are the most famous of China's duck breeds. Gaoyou ducks are of especially high quality because they are raised in lakes and rivers where they can eat pollution-free food. The eggs that Gaoyou ducks lay are famous for their red double yolks and snowy egg whites. As a common family dish, Gaoyou duck eggs have a special fresh flavor that can go with both rice and wine.

The Gaoyou duck eggs can be traced back over 900 years to

the Song Dynasty. Qin Shaoyou, a famous poet during the Northern Song Dynasty, gave Gaoyou eggs as presents to his best friend and teacher, Su Dongpo, who was the governor in Xuzhou at that time. Many writers and poets in Chinese history have written of Gaoyou eggs, and described the delicacy of the eggs in their works.

Beneath the description, Charles posted five photos, of which the most eye-catching is the one with the caption "International egg model Vera shows off the Gaoyou duck egg." So these duck eggs even had a model publicizing them? I had never heard of such a thing? I asked Charles where he got that photo. What he told me was this: Vera the "model" and the photographer Ringer were a couple who came to Gaoyou with him, so they became friends. They were also parents who have adopted a child from Gaoyou. The wording "international duck egg model" in the caption was just for humor to enhance the effect. So this was a piece of free advertisement, and this advertisement reached all the way to America!

Charles' account of Gaoyou's general conditions is based on the content of the Gaoyou municipal website, translated into English, with place names rendered into pinyin romanization. His depiction of the city, on the other hand, is based on his walks around the city, and his walks indeed covered just about every corner of the old city.¹¹ His account of the locations and brief narrations of the streets, the markets, hospital, and all the scenic spots have a natural eloquence, easy to read and yet extremely informative. They really give the reader a comprehensive profile and impression of Gaoyou City.

At first, I did not understand why Charles wanted to include on his website a tab for "Finding Sites"¹² and to make a special point of describing these sites. Later on, after I did some research, I came to understand Charles' motivation. In the U.S., information about everything is easy to come by. When people buy

¹¹ This refers to the long-established inner city, as opposed to the recently developed outlying areas. Within the "old" inner city, there is a much smaller "old town" in which some historic buildings are preserved.

¹² See preceding footnote.

food items in stores, they can find the ingredients and nutritional composition right on the package. In buying an automobile, people can find reference materials on the various makes and models, even including how they measure up to safety standards. Answers to any question can be found; one only has to ask the appropriate specialists or search in appropriate printed materials. However, there aren't any personal files for children adopted from China. Their birth parents typically leave very little, if any, information about them. Their names are usually assigned by the Children's Welfare Institute, and their dates of birth are likewise deduced by the institute. Understandably, the adoptive parents feel a certain loss and would want to make every effort to retrieve information about their children's origins. They piece together whatever bits and pieces of information they can find in trying to formulate a relatively complete picture of the beginning of their children's life. Sometimes small mundane objects become priceless treasures to them. Things like a little baby bunting or a hand-sewn cloth shoe, these are all seen as emblematic of the loving care the newborn child received. The finding sites are vital for the adoptive parents to visit, because they are compelled to stand at those very spots to envision their child's birth parents and the circumstances of abandoning the child.

The deepest impression that I got from the website and the guidebook is from the two essays "Impressions of Gaoyou" and "People of Gaoyou" written by Charles, for they present a vision of Gaoyou as seen with a "third eye," and as such, form a portrait with extra dimensions. In "Impressions of Gaoyou," Charles described in exquisite detail the various vehicles that ply the streets of Gaoyou. The bicycles, pedal-powered carts, motorcycles, three-wheeled trucks, tricycle rickshaws, and even "mule" pickup trucks, Charles spared no detail in describing the special characteristics of these vehicles, their respective proportions on the streets, and even the extent to which traffic regulations are observed. From here, Charles, who enjoys walking about in the early morning, moved on to all that he saw and heard on his early morning walks around Gaoyou. From the perspective of an objective bystander, he observed with keen interest everything about the people, things, and events, like groups of people exercising, state of pollution, street cleaning and garbage removal, natural

scenes of farms in the environs, vendors with pushcarts selling breakfast and the various types of food they offered. In a few deft strokes, he painted a Gaoyou City brimming with life and graced with a small town atmosphere. In the concluding paragraph, he wrote:

One thing about Gaoyou that did not sink in until we had left is the small town feeling that it has. This is hard for me to define, but when we stopped in Nanjing after leaving Gaoyou, it seemed like a different world. With the tall buildings and all the cars, Nanjing seemed like a much colder place. It made me long to return to Gaoyou, a feeling that has yet to fade.

This essay written by Charles in April of 2005 was a simple straightforward sketch of Gaoyou at the time. In the ensuing couple of years, the Gaoyou Party Committee and the municipal government have boosted their effort to revamp the environment, so there have been significant improvements in traffic conditions and environmental hygiene. On his return visit in November 2006, Charles clearly felt these changes. I briefed him on the measures taken by our government to revamp the environment across the board, and he said he would update his website on the recent changes after returning to the U.S. And indeed, he has recently added his new observations and impressions from his second Gaoyou visit, and has described these changes in rather concrete terms.

Compared with "Impressions of Gaoyou," the essay "People of Gaoyou" is imbued with even more human interest. In it, Charles writes:

The people of Gaoyou seemed unaccustomed to having Americans in their midst. Unlike in the larger cities, none of the stores or vendors were ready to take advantage of us. While this meant we could shop in peace without the hard-sell tactics of the merchants in Shanghai, it also meant that virtually no one spoke any English.

An exception, however, were the children, who loved to

try out their English on us. When we saw them on the street, they would offer a "hello" and then erupt in fits of giggles when we responded with a "hello."

While most people we encountered were not openly welcoming initially, they quickly warmed up once the ice was broken. Most were very patient with our attempts at speaking Mandarin. The clerks in the stores were prone to fits of giggles when I especially butchered their language.

Continuing from the above, Charles calculated the income situation of Gaoyou citizens, and came to the conclusion that "The income level of the people of Gaoyou seems to cover a broad range." This he deduced from his observations of the number of beggars in the city, people's attire, and their modes of transportation. He also made a special point of evaluating the beauty of Gaoyou women. While he did not claim to be qualified to say that they are more beautiful than women in other cities, he did offer the opinion that "...there were many pretty women in Gaoyou. And no one can deny that the daughters adopted from Gaoyou are all quite beautiful." Scenes of children going to school also did not escape Charles' perceptive eye, as the picture of parents taking their kids to school on bikes was captured by Charles in a paragraph filled with wit and humor:

I marveled at how smaller children could be seen riding on the bookrack over the rear wheel of their parent's bicycle or scooter, displaying excellent balance. They would ride all over town just sitting on the rack, without foot pegs, and sometimes even without holding on. While most often it was the mothers you would see with the kids, it wasn't unusual to see a father with a child, walking the smaller kids to or from school.

Charles also used some very tender words to describe infants and toddlers, along with their open-crotch pants. This style of pants for kids, which couldn't

be more ordinary to us Chinese, was a marvelous innovation and something worthy of solemn respect in the eyes of this foreigner!

Split pants are traditional clothing in China for infants and toddlers. The crotch of children's pants is open down to the skin, which allows the parent to quickly squat the child over a toilet or gutter when he or she needs "to go." I'm sure this comes in quite handy especially in the winter months when the children are commonly bundled up in multiple layers of clothes.

Charles had considerable praise for the warm friendliness of the folks in Gaoyou, and was very much at ease with its level of public security. Because he cannot speak Chinese, he is uncharacteristically shy about chatting with people in Gaoyou. So he hopes to learn a bit more Chinese so that he could be more outgoing on his next visit, and be able to understand the people of Gaoyou even better.

It's quite a phenomenon for Charles - an American from a first-world country - to personally experience life in Gaoyou. He carried with him special sentiments, and while he may have walked only in the old inner city, what he saw may be only partial, and then perhaps only the surface appearances, yet by and large his observations are true and credible. His writing shows an attitude of academic research, yet the language is full of affection, and reflects an outlook from a different culture. It truly makes for delightful reading.

Americans tend to be meticulous and earnest in observing things. On Charles' website, there is an excerpt from an essay written by another adoptive parent, Mike Mann, in which there is a depiction of a small noodle restaurant that is exquisitely written and worthy of being called a masterpiece.

In the early morning, the streets are alive with activity....Along the way, among these vendors, are small shops preparing hot dumplings and noodles for breakfast...Most of

the heating for the dumplings and noodles is done with a stove made from an empty 55-gallon drum...It...is made with a firebrick insert into which is placed a single large coal and clay briquette about the size of a third of a loaf of bread. As the stove draws in air, it creates a soft roar. You can see into the firebox from the opening for the briquette. It's a powerful little furnace used to boil water in a large pan...Noodles are prepared right in the pan. Dumplings are steamed by stacking split bamboo steam trays on top of the pan...Each little shop, perhaps the size of a small single car garage, with a picnic style table or two, has a worktable...On the worktable, the dough is prepared, clean soft, and pure in stark contrast to the rusted black stoves, colorless walls, and streets dark from years of gray smoke from the coal-fired, open stoves. ...The clean white dough is prepared and cut into squares. Then the cooked meat or vegetables are added and the dough is folded into perfect pieces of art work...laid out in perfect geometry on loose flour to prevent sticking...The trays of dumplings are a beautiful white mosaic framed by the genuine, sincere faces of the people who created them, against a gray dirty, busy street scene.

At this point, Mike Mann suddenly turned his pen to give voice to his sentimental reflections and viewpoint. He felt that the children of Gaoyou are fortunate to be born in this small town in China, surrounded by agriculture, where life is well-nourished and more precious than in the press of a large city. He then displayed his expansive mindset, and addressed the children of Gaoyou in these heart-felt words:

Children from Gaoyou, ... You come from a background that many might consider poor and of little status, but just as those dumplings are as perfect and as fit for their purpose as any-

thing prepared in the finest kitchen, so you "dumplings" are as fine and fit for success and the purpose of life as anyone from anywhere on earth. As the ingredients here are grown and harvested daily from the land, prepared with great care and precision, and have great nutritional value; and as they come from the honest labor of good people; so the spirit and capabilities within you are genuine and rich and you have much to offer to those you love, and to the world...The wealth of your home people is not wealth as most people count wealth. However, your people are wise, kind, strong, industrious, and care for each other. What wealth is greater than that? You have a rich heritage from your people.

From observing the owner of a small noodle shop making dumplings, seeing the little lumps of dough, the writer Mike Mann was lead to thought of the children of Gaoyou, who are like these little lumps of dough in his mind's eye. They come from the labor of good hardworking people, and will have accomplishments for the good of society. In the same vein, the writer also extols the wise and diligent character and tradition of the people of Gaoyou. The entire passage truly tugs at one's heart strings. It is my belief that Charles intentionally included this excerpt to instill in their adopted children a sense of pride in their natal heritage.

On Charles' website and in the guidebook, there is a section called "Gaoyou travel guide."¹³ In this section, Charles has taken his first-hand experience visiting Gaoyou and systematically prepared a thorough description of everything that a foreign visitor should know, including maps, walking routes, and detailed narration of the various sites. Aside from this, he even made quite a

¹³ As of 2009, this section is called "visit Gaoyou" on the website and "Tips for a visit to Gaoyou" in the guidebook. Quite apart from this, Charles Day has also produced a booklet called *Gaoyou, a Visitor's Guide to the Historic City on China's Grand Canal*, which is downloadable from the website. This booklet as well as the webpage <http://wikitravel.org/en/gaoyou> differ from the "website" and "guidebook" (the main topic of this section of the chapter) in that they are intended for the general audience who may not have a special interest in the adoption of Chinese infants.

few suggestions for remedying some current deficiencies in Gaoyou's services to visitors. For example, it is not easy to cash traveler's checks in Gaoyou, even the Hongsheng Hotel - the very best in Gaoyou - does not cash traveler's checks or exchange foreign currency. But there is a bank north of the Hongsheng Hotel where traveler's checks can be cashed, and there is an ATM machine outside where one can draw cash with a credit card. Foreign visitors are advised to bring sufficient RMB. The quality of the internet connection is also of concern. From their hotel room, they were unable to get a stable DSL connection.

The "Gaoyou travel guide" on the website and in the guidebook is truly the most intimate travel guide that I have ever seen. It is both scientific and humanistic. For example, he offers the following advice to the would-be Gaoyou visitor:

The morning is a refreshing time to walk around the quiet streets, and observe the residents starting their day.

.....

If you're feeling tired from walking around, take a pedi-cab, they're everywhere. Bring along a card from the hotel to show the driver, who will get you back to the hotel for only about 5 *yuan* (61 cents). Car Taxis don't cost much more. In Gaoyou, you don't need to worry about being cheated by taxi drivers.

Furthermore, Charles also gives detailed information about where one can buy a map of Gaoyou, how much it costs, where postcards and Gaoyou commemorative coins are available, where to buy antiques, and so on.

In the process of creating the website and the guidebook, Charles received support from a good many families who have adopted children from Gaoyou. In the Preface, Charles expressed thanks to fifteen persons who have contributed to this work. Some of them provided photos, some collected materials for him, some contributed essays of their personal reflections, and some helped him de-

sign the website and the guide. Charles said that without their help and contributions the website could not have been built and the guide could not have been published.

At first, Charles attached his webpage under another website called "Star." Later on, he registered for an independent domain. Charles told me that it is very inexpensive to register an internet domain in the U.S. The cost is only \$30 per year. This website of Charles' has been a tremendous hit in the U.S. and Canada. All the families who have adopted children from Gaoyou log on to it frequently. Some families that have adopted from elsewhere in Jiangsu and other provinces also log on to it. Aside from getting useful information, they can also savor Chinese culture and tradition on this website. I asked Charles whether his website keeps track of the number of hits. He told me that there is a counter at the bottom of the website, but he had to reset it several times. It has registered approximately 25,000 hits, but the actual number is probably much higher than that.

Reading things on the web has its limitations, and sometimes it is somewhat inconvenient. So to meet the needs of the readership, Charles re-formatted the material that he had on the website and produced a pictorial guide to Gaoyou. The number of copies in the first printing was quite small, and the demand far exceeded the supply, so it was reprinted in October 2005. It wasn't my place to ask how much this book costs, or how many copies were sold. What I do know is that it was distributed to five countries - U.S., Canada, England, France, and Australia. Each printing cost \$5000. In the front matter of the book, it is noted that "all profits from the sale of this book have been donated to the Half the Sky Foundation."

After this pictorial guide came out, it received many favorable comments and expressions of appreciation from adoptive families. Here I will reprint several typical responses from readers. A lady by the name of Kirsten wrote:

I just received my copy of the Gaoyou book yesterday. I haven't had time to read it all yet, but it is such a wonderful keepsake for me and my daughter! It looks very professional and I am delighted to have it. I am very grateful to you and everyone involved in its production. I only wish I had such a book for my older daughter's home town (Chuzhou, Anhui Province). Heartfelt thanks!

Dawn Hartman wrote:

We received the book over the weekend and have been looking at it and sharing it with others ever since. It is such a labor of love and beautiful gift to your daughter. Thank you for sharing it with all of us. We are not quite certain how to express our deep gratitude. It means so much to us to have the wonderful pictures and history of the town where Tessa spent the first part of her life. Even though we visited the institution in late March, we saw little to nothing of Gaoyou.

From Sherrie Buscemi, we have:

WOW! WOW! WOW! It is FANTASTIC! I could FEEL Gaoyou in it.

And from Emily Clarke, Director of Development at Half the Sky Foundation, we have:

I had the great pleasure of seeing your book arrive in the office, along with the fantastic contribution. This is a truly impressive

book—how I would love to have something like this about my daughters' cities? Congratulations! I know there are many grateful Gaoyou families out there, and we at HTS are equally grateful that you chose to support our programs through your labor of love.

Why did Charles want to bring his child back to the Gaoyou CWI to visit? Why are his website and guidebook so well received? On the basis of my contact with the adoptive families, I have the profound feeling that what's reflected here is a kind of kinship bond and sense of roots that these families have for Gaoyou. These sentiments are nowhere reflected more poignantly than in the "Conclusion" in Charles Day's guidebook to Gaoyou:

The Zhongshikou Market has a special significance for me because it is the finding site for our daughter. It is quite an experience to walk through the market and neighborhood, and imagine that day in February 2003 when a mother came down to the Market and left a precious little girl wrapped in a ski jacket. I wish I could meet her and tell her how beautiful her daughter is and how well she is doing, but it is not to be.

I hope that with this book, families of Gaoyou children can maintain their bond with this unique place.

4. FOREIGN PHILANTHROPY AT WORK IN CHINA'S ORPHANAGES

An American volunteer team comes to Gaoyou

On April 9, 2005, a report by Lu Xuezhi entitled "Love from the Other Side of the Pacific – a Team of Twenty-two Volunteers from the American Half the Sky Foundation Comes to Gaoyou" appeared on the website "Gaoyou Today." The report was about a gathering in the afternoon of April 8 celebrating the completion of a project at the Gaoyou CWI. This was the volunteers' final day in Gaoyou, and it was the most gratifying moment for them. A party was under way in the Jiangsu Province Foster Family Village. In attendance were over a hundred people: the twenty-two American Half the Sky Foundation volunteers who had worked hard for days to repaint this newly-founded facility, the six newly-formed foster families, teachers and trainers from near and far, and "grannies" for the CWI's infants. The group consisted of people of different nationalities and different skin colors who did not speak a common language, yet they were united by their common mission of "Everything for children, for everything of children." On this occasion, they came together with true love in their hearts and sincere smiles on their faces. When Jenny Bowen, Executive Director of the Half the Sky Foundation,¹ spoke through an interpreter about the purpose of this trip – to see the homeland of our children,² and to give more caring love and help to other children in their homeland who are still in need, applause broke out across the room.

Actually, in recent days, many local people in Gaoyou had seen these twenty-some Americans dressed in work outfits walking around town, going in and out of the Children's Welfare Institute, and greeting people on the street. Everyone was curious about what these foreigners were doing in Gaoyou. So now they know, these were members of a volunteer team from the U.S.

According to the then Director of the Gaoyou CWI Mr. Ni Yongling, HTS has signed an agreement with the Jiangsu Provincial Bureau of Civil Affairs whereby this Foundation will support four programs in Children's Welfare Institutes in the province. On the basis of Executive Director Jenny Bowen's on-site investigations, the Foundation chose Gaoyou to be the site for implementing three of these four programs. To help launch these three programs, the Foundation donated a total of ¥1,000,000, mainly for remodeling and renovating the physical facility, and purchasing appliances, furniture, teaching materials, toys, and employee salaries. The volunteer team was sponsored by HTS. They came from thirteen families who had adopted children from China. The oldest among them was sixty, and the youngest was only seventeen. Among the thirteen families, only six had adopted their children from Gaoyou, but by volunteering their service to this particular CWI, all of them were repaying the various Children's Welfare Institutes from which they had adopted children. They covered their own cost of coming to Gaoyou to participate in this project and didn't expect to receive remuneration of any kind. This is what the term "volunteer work" means.

The volunteer team worked in Gaoyou for one full week, six to seven hours per day. They mainly helped with the exterior and interior renovation of the building to be used for the HTS

¹ Henceforth in this book, the Half the Sky Foundation will also be referred to as "HTS."

² As many of the volunteers, Jenny Bowen and her husband have adopted children from China.

programs. They did everything including carpentry, painting, and cleaning-up. Moreover their work was fast-paced and efficient. At the conclusion of the week's work, the foreman of this volunteer team showed his deep emotions as he put his signature on the freshly painted white wall. Then, with joyful excitement, the other members of the team and leaders of the CWI all walked up one by one and added their names onto this wall of love. Several adopted Chinese children who had come along with the volunteer team also left their names on the wall; some even drew a heart next to their names. Finally, the Director of HTS China Headquarters wrote in both Chinese and English "Built with Love and Hope!" These words expressed the feelings shared by everyone in the room that day. Those signatures, words and drawings are still clearly visible today.

April ninth was an unforgettable day for the Gaoyou CWI. Early that morning, spring rain fell on and off from the sky, as though it was washing away the cumulative fatigue of the hard-working volunteers from America, but also as though Gaoyou was shedding tears of gratitude for the love bestowed by those from afar. At 8:30 a.m. that morning, standing outside of the Hongsheng Hotel where they had stayed, the twenty-two volunteers were in exceptionally good spirits, for their earnest labor in the past week had turned their hopes and dreams into reality, and they were about to say goodbye to their adopted children's hometown. Director Ni of the CWI came with his heart filled with gratitude to say farewell to the group, and shook hands with each of them as they boarded the bus. When he declared with deep sincerity "When we have the opportunity, we will come see our children in America," the sound of applause broke out in and outside of the bus. From the windows of the bus came the awkwardly-accented yet heartfelt Chinese words "Xièxie! Zàijiàn! Zàijiàn! Xièxie!" Quite a few of the volunteers, with tears in their eyes, pushed the windows open to wave goodbye. Amidst the sound of "zàijiàn...zàijiàn..." the bus slowly pulled away. In this poignant parting, the American volunteers took with them the warm friendship of the people of Gaoyou, and left behind their love for the children at the Gaoyou CWI.

I had occasionally seen the term "volunteer service" in newspapers before, but I hadn't fully grasped its connotations. The work by the HTS volunteer team in Gaoyou gave me a first-hand feel for this concept, and aroused in me a deep interest in this phenomenon. Afterwards, through researching references on this subject and seeking detailed information from my American friend Charles Day, I was able to gain a fairly good understanding of volunteerism in America.

The English word "volunteer" is what we call "zhìyuànzǐ" in Chinese. It refers to those who contribute their time and energy - for no material rewards of any kind - to provide service for the betterment of society. They are not driven by personal benefits or legal mandates, but by their own morality, convictions, conscience, sympathy, and sense of responsibility. In essence, "volunteerism" is self-motivated, benefitting others, and devoid of remuneration.

From certain Chinese language sources,³ we learned that volunteers exist in every corner of American society. Many Americans take volunteer work to be an important part of life, and they strongly believe in "paying back to society." Americans who engage in volunteer service often begin at a young age, and continue with it throughout their lives. Individuals as well as whole

³ "Learn from the example of American volunteers," www.eastday.com, Dec. 7, 2005; "American volunteers in the eyes of Chinese mothers," by Jiang Jiangmin, Hong Kong Wenhuibao, January 2006.

families would participate together. One source estimates that 50% of Americans are active volunteers. There are over 5000 volunteer organizations of various kinds in the country, some are national, some are local, and some are organized by private individuals. Their funding comes mostly from religious organizations, philanthropic organizations, or individual donations, but rarely from government sources. According to one source, in the year 2000, half of the American population age thirteen and above did four hours of volunteer work per week on the average. If we take the average non-agricultural wage of \$17.25 per hour, then the monetary value of volunteer service by all Americans comes to nearly \$240,000,000,000 for the year. This figure exceeds the total expenditure for residential construction in the U.S., and is just about equivalent to twice the revenue of the Chinese government.⁴

There is great variety in the work performed by American volunteers, such as assisting in the management of daily life for those who are sick, physically or mentally handicapped, disabled, widowed and/or elderly; teaching poor or disadvantaged children; conducting medical exams and preventive medicine for impoverished families, and teaching them basic culture and life skills; helping alcoholics and drug addicts recover; inoculating children against diseases; restoring urban parks; caring for children; and maintaining local traffic and public order. Volunteers work mainly in community and public welfare organizations, such as senior citizens activities centers, hospitals, libraries and the Red Cross. In the relevant non-profit organizations, there are specific departments set up to coordinate the work of these volunteers. It is not difficult at all for volunteer organizations to recruit non-salaried workers. Sometimes the supply of volunteers even exceeds the demand, so that these organizations must be selective in order to stay within their limits.

Volunteer work is by now a well-established tradition in the U.S. It is quite systematized, very widespread, and tacitly encouraged by society. For example, persons who have performed volunteer work over a long period of time or have made unusual contributions are given favorable consideration when it comes to college admission and employment. Many high schools require students to do as many as seventy-five hours of volunteer work over four years of high school. Students who fail to meet this requirement not only cannot graduate, they would also have difficulty being admitted to top colleges, because these colleges consider not only academic achievements, but also stress moral character and humanistic values. A certain private college has a graduation requirement of six credits earned through 160 hours of volunteer work. On the surface, it seems a bit disingenuous to do volunteer work in order to earn credits, but actually this reflects a certain value orientation in American society.

Volunteer activity has also been encouraged and supported by the president and the government of the United States. In 1993, President Clinton signed a bill called "The National and Community Service Act," which promotes volunteer service by young people. This bill stipulates that youths who have performed 1400 hours of volunteer service will receive up to \$4725 of government scholarship annually. These funds may be used to pay for college or professional training, or to repay educational loans. In late January 2002, President Bush in his State of the Union speech appealed to all Americans to join the ranks of volunteers. He called upon each and every American to contribute 4000 hours - equivalent to two years of full-time work - within their lifetime. Today, American volunteers are active not only in the U.S., but have also extended themselves to other parts of the world, and have affected the world with their spirit of service. In

⁴ "Learn from the example of American volunteers," www.eastday.com, Dec. 7, 2005

fact, American volunteers have already penetrated into China and have left their mark in Gaoyou. We have indeed been touched by the spirit of service of the volunteers who have come into our midst.

From various online news reports such as "American HTS Volunteers Contribute Their Love to the Chengdu CWI" published on 19 September 2004, "Ten American Families Work as Volunteers in Haikou" published on 12 April 2005, and "American HTS Volunteers in Xuzhou Social Welfare Institute" published on 1 June 2005, I learned that American volunteer teams similar to the one that came to Gaoyou have surfaced in many places in China. As it turns out, whenever HTS launches a new project at a certain Children's Welfare Institute, it is customary for the Foundation to organize a group of American families who have adopted children from that location to come participate in one week of volunteer work at that institute.

The Half the Sky Foundation

"Half the sky" is a phrase familiar to everyone in China. Ever since Mao Zedong made the pronouncement "Women can hold up half the sky," it came to be embedded in the heart of every Chinese. This phrase signifies that the position of women has risen in New China, and it has uplifted the aspirations and confidence of Chinese women on a broad scale. But it wasn't until 2005 when I hosted Jenny Bowen that I first heard of the Half the Sky Foundation. It is a non-profit private organization founded in 1998 by American families with children adopted from China. The original intention was to repay - with actual deeds - the kindness of the Chinese government and people in entrusting their lovely children to them. Their actual deeds are directed mainly at promoting the healthy development of children who remain in China's children's welfare institutes. Because the vast majority of those children who have been adopted by families from abroad as well as those who remain in Children's Welfare Institutes are girls, this organization decided to take its name "Half the Sky Foundation" from that well-known adage by Mao.

Jenny Bowen – Founder of the Half the Sky Foundation

In July of 2005, Executive Director of HTS Jenny Bowen, accompanied by Ms. Zhang Zhirong – a representative of China's National People's Congress, came on an inspection tour of the Gaoyou Children's Welfare Institute. Since I was in a position to represent the Gaoyou municipal Party Committee and municipal government, I had the honor of hosting their visit. It was in the course of their visit that I came to know all about HTS and Ms. Jenny Bowen, for which I have Ms. Zhang Zhirong to thank for her expert introduction and interpreting. A native of Tianjin, Ms. Zhang received her undergraduate education from Beijing Foreign Languages University and then an M.A. from the University of Michigan. Highly proficient in English, she served as a translator for China International Travel Service early in her career. Later on, she worked as coordinator and project director for several UN-supported population projects in China. And then for the ten years prior to joining HTS, she worked for the China Population Welfare Foundation as Director of International Liaison and Assistant to the Secretary-General in Strategic Planning and Management. Currently she works full-time for HTS.

In the course of our conversations, I learned that Ms. Bowen had been a Hollywood film script writer and director. Her works include "Street Music," a story about the plight of elderly

tenants in danger of losing their housing in an urban setting; "Wizard of Loneliness," a coming-of-age tale of a precocious but mean-spirited 12-year-old boy sent to live with his grandparents in a small Vermont town during WW II; and "In a Quiet Night," a suspense drama portraying the ethical and legal dilemmas in a case of incestuous sex abuse. Ms. Bowen had not been interested in the field of education at first, much less education in the context of social welfare. She had in fact never given it any thought. So what led her to change her direction in life so radically, and how did she become so passionate about the cause of social welfare?

It all began with a trip she took to China in 1997. On that trip, she visited a Children's Welfare Institute in Guangdong Province, where she saw many girls from six months to six years of age. The impact on her was immediate. In her own words many years later, "The first time I walked into an orphanage, I wanted to sweep all the (girls) out of there and adopt every one of them. They just stare at you with a vacant expression. It's very hard to take in and not want to do something."⁵ Moved by maternal instinct, Jenny decided to adopt a Chinese daughter. Her husband Richard Bowen (a cinematographer and creator of television advertisements) also supported her idea. So Jenny completed the necessary procedures and adopted a toddler girl. She named her Maya and brought her back to America. After only a brief period of adjustment, Maya and her "foreign mother" developed a relationship no different from that of a birth mother and child. At the time of her adoption, Maya was physically ill and developmentally delayed, but with a great deal of affection and attention, she quickly "caught up" with her peers and was transformed into a joyful lively girl. Two years later, Jenny and her husband made another trip to Guangzhou. By chance, she came across a one-year-old girl in a hospital who was awaiting surgery for a tumor on her neck. Jenny prayed for this girl, but didn't see any parent or other relatives around. Then a doctor told her that this child was from a children's welfare institute. Looking and looking at this child, Jenny was intensely reminded of her daughter Maya when she was small, and her heart began to ache for her. Jenny was again compelled by that universal maternal instinct and decided to bring this child into the warm fold of her family. She named her second Chinese daughter Anya.

Ms. Bowen is not especially wealthy. She has raised two birth children of her own. Taking care of her Chinese daughters - both with medical issues when they were adopted - entailed considerable expense. But undeterred, she applied for medical insurance for her children and was thus relieved of a great deal of financial pressure. In the case of Anya, her tumor was totally cured after almost a year of treatment. Today, both her Chinese daughters are very healthy. During our dinner together, Jenny had a telephone conversation with her two daughters. The intimate mother-daughter relationship so clearly reflected in their warm sweet chat about everyday matters would be the envy of any family. Jenny also showed me a photo of her daughters, in which I saw two pretty Chinese girls cuddled against their "foreign mother," everyone smiling so happily. How fortunate these girls are!

Founding of the Half the Sky Foundation

After Jenny Bowen adopted her first Chinese daughter Maya, watching her grow day by day, becoming more and more vivacious and lovable, she was haunted by all those children who re-

⁵ "Making a world of difference: Adopting two girls from China, Jenny Bowen of Berkeley and other parents are working to help the ones they left behind." San Francisco Chronicle, November 4, 2001

mained in China's orphanages and began to formulate a project to create a better life for them. Seeing how Maya flourished both physically and emotionally once she had the warmth of a family and the love of a mother, she sensed that the other children in China's orphanages could also be as vivacious and lovable as Maya if they only had the same nurturing as Maya. But how could a few families adopt all these children? But if she could create a foundation and gather many Chinese mothers and grandmothers who still have maternal energy and love to share with the children in need, wouldn't that enhance their well-being and lessen their misery? Jenny is an indefatigable person who carries out her good ideas into action. To verify the correctness of her views and the feasibility of her plan, she began to investigate and research the condition of children in orphanages. Whenever she went to a foreign country, the first thing she would do is to look at children in orphanages. Typically, they are confined to their limited worlds, like cribs or walkers, being looked after by one of two over-burdened nannies. Seeing those eyes staring at you with that look of begging for a hug, and hearing the voices calling out in a non-verbal yet universally understandable babble, any mother would be touched to the core.

In early 1998, Jenny began writing to other American adoptive families about her ideas for a "Grannies Infant Nurturing Program" and a "Little Sisters Preschool Program," and introducing the prospect of establishing a foundation. The response she received was very heartening. All the families who received her letter replied by mail or phone call expressing their support for her plan; some also offered additional suggestions to flesh out her ideas. Thus, proposals like "cuddle the crying child," "give the child a mother's kiss," and "individual love and care" became the clarion calls for the soul of every surrogate mother and granny. Under Jenny's initiative and organization, the American HTS was formally established in July 1998.

When I asked Jenny how she came to choose the name "Half the Sky," she laughed and said "The phrase 'Half the Sky' originated in China, but it has become well-known throughout the world. Since the majority of the board members and employees of our foundation are women, and the orphans that we have adopted are mostly girls, plus the first two programs that we implemented are the "Grannies Program" and the "Little Sisters Program," this means that women play a tremendous role in our mission. As it is said in Chinese, women can hold up half the sky. It is also my hope that we as well as our daughters will join the ranks of capable women to achieve great things, to hold up half the sky."

Programs of the Half the Sky Foundation

During her visit to Gaoyou, Jenny Bowen described to me in great detail the three programs that HTS has already implemented in China.⁶ As she explained, although the Chinese government has shown concern for all Children's Welfare Institutes in the country, the children growing up in welfare institutes are disadvantaged as compared with children in normal society. In order for children to grow up healthy and normal, we need to not only provide them with the basic essentials of food, shelter, and healthcare, but must also attend to their need for interaction, stimulation, love, and sense of security through our everyday contact with them. And in caring for them, we must give them individualized attention so as to be sensitive to their individual needs

⁶ Half the Sky's activities continue to evolve according to China's needs. Following the Sichuan earthquake in 2008, it set up "Big Tents" in the earthquake-affected area to provide day care for preschool children and vacation activities for school-age children. The Foundation's newest program is the China Care Program which provides medical treatment and nurturing after-care for medically fragile orphaned infants. Up-to-date information about the Foundation can be found at www.halfthesky.org.

and potential abilities. Of the hundreds of thousands of orphans in China's welfare institutes, the vast majority are girls. Life for women in general is still not that easy in contemporary Chinese society, and because Chinese society is built on the foundation of the family, life for a girl without a family becomes doubly difficult. Under these circumstances, receiving an education would give these girls the best hope for the best future possible. This then is the chief purpose in establishing HTS: to help those girls prepare for their future life outside of the welfare institute, to give them the same opportunities as their more fortunate age peers to develop their potential. On the basis of this concept, HTS brought together a team of Chinese and Western educators to formulate a set of educational models. As a result, the following programs have been put into operation.

The Little Sisters Preschool Program

Early childhood is a rather crucial stage in the development of a child. What happens during this period plays a decisive role in a person's intellectual and social abilities in the future. All children are born with potential and eagerness for learning. As long as they are provided with suitable activities and sensory stimulation during the appropriate stage of development, they would naturally absorb knowledge effortlessly.

The Little Sisters Preschool Program recruits young teachers locally and then trains them to adopt an innovative educational model in which the substance of what is taught is tailored to the needs of each child. The curriculum blends together the Reggio approach used in the West with the state-of-the-art Chinese preschool educational methods, and allows considerable room for the teachers to bring their talents into play. The intellectual, emotional, and social potential of each child is carefully nurtured through sustained inspiration, individual attention, and guided mental and physical activities and games. The entire process is recorded in detail, including seminar discussions and evaluations of the children, periodic photos and videotapes of their activities, and the various arts and crafts that reflect the children's imagination and learning. For every little sister, the program assembles a "commemorative album" – an authentic record of her early childhood - which will be with her the rest of her life.

Grannies Infant Nurturing Program

This program is designed specifically for infants from newborn to eighteen months. What infants need most is the personalized love of a family. The children in China's welfare institutes all receive decent basic care, but many welfare institutes are faced with the problem of insufficient staffing. This program recruits a number of retired or laid-off workers from the local community and trains them to be special "grannies." Each granny spends a certain amount of time daily caring for three to five infants. They develop an emotional bond with these infants through the natural parental acts of hugging, cuddling, stroking, and playing, which is necessary for opening up the path for mental and emotional development in these young tender spirits. This program creates a warm family-style ambiance in these infants' environment, thereby providing them with a healthy start in life.

Big Sisters Educational Support Program

This program is designed for older children – mostly children with disabilities – who are growing up in welfare institutes but cannot attend school. Because these girls without families do not have even a basic education, they have no options for the future. Society seems to have abandoned them, and even more heartbreaking, often they themselves have also given up hope.

This program considers these children's individual needs and provides them with the appropriate kinds of help in order to improve their lives, including tutoring, financial aid for education, music lessons, and training in computer, language, and vocational skills. Each child is given a comprehensive evaluation, and is given the most suitable individualized help on the basis of that evaluation.

Half the Sky Foundation's Programs in Gaoyou

In early 2005, HTS signed a two-year contract with the Civil Administration of Jiangsu Province, whereby the three following projects would be put into operation in Gaoyou: Jiangsu Children Family Village, Little Sisters Preschool Program, and Grannies Infant Nurturing Program. HTS would provide professional training, financial support, and guidance by experts. The Provincial Civil Administration would be responsible for organization, coordination, and other assistance.

Jiangsu Children Family Village

This is a new program launched in 2005 by HTS in China's social welfare system, and Gaoyou was selected to be the first site in the nation to carry out this project. In the following year, the Foundation extended this program to welfare institutes in Henan province, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Nanjing. By now these "family villages" have become the Foundation's major type of program in China.

To build a warm homelike facility for this project – the Jiangsu Children's Family Village, an old office building at the Gaoyou Children Welfare Institute was remodeled with a donation of ¥300,000 from HTS, matched by ¥500,000 from the Institute. The building was converted into six apartments, each with one living room and two bedrooms – one for the children and one for the foster parents, plus a kitchen and a bathroom, with an average living space of 11.7 square meters per person.⁷ . In addition, HTS donated nearly ¥200,000 to provide these new homes with furnishings such as furniture, bedding, air-conditioners, refrigerators, hot water heaters, and televisions.

To create families for the orphaned children, HTS selected the best possible foster parents through an open, fair, impartial recruitment process in Gaoyou in March 2005. The applicants must meet the following requirements: husband and wife must apply as a couple; they should be around fifty years old, have a harmonious marital relationship, be physically healthy, have no addictions such as smoking, alcohol, and gambling; they should have at least a middle school education, must have successfully raised one or more children, and their children must be already grown up and either studying or working elsewhere; the foster father must have a job locally and

⁷ This living space is roughly equivalent to 700 square feet, which compares quite favorably with the average-income family in secondary cities in contemporary China.

be able to come home every day; the foster mother must be available to be a full-time stay-at-home mom to care for the children. The selection process included registration, written test, interview, comprehensive home visit and inspection, and physical exams. After a rigorous selection process that began with nineteen couples who applied, six couples were selected to be foster parents for the families of the Jiangsu Children Family Village. These six sets of foster parents then underwent a training process managed by Director Zhang Yuxia of HTS's Foster Family Program.⁸ The training included everything from the goals and significance of the "children's family" to the duties and responsibilities of the foster parents. At the same time, rules and regulations concerning various aspects of the Family Village - including the care and nurturing of the children, material consumption, and facility maintenance - were formulated and promulgated among the foster parents so that they would be guided by a set of rules.

On May 1, 2005, with Jenny Bowen presiding, twenty-four handicapped orphans from nine different Children Welfare Institutes in the Province were officially welcomed into this internationally-founded Children Family Village. To qualify for this program, the handicapped orphans must be between two and seven years of age, unlikely to be adopted due to some disability but capable of benefitting from education. At the time, there were not enough handicapped orphans in the Gaoyou CWI who meet the above qualifications, but HTS wished to locate this cooperative project in Gaoyou, so the Provincial Civil Administration stepped in and negotiated with the various welfare organizations in the province to select and transfer this group of handicapped orphans to the Family Village. The Gaoyou CWI then judiciously allocated four children to each of the six pairs of foster parents, taking into consideration their age and disability condition. Thus a home environment with the ambiance of a warm family was created for these handicapped orphans. In genuine families of their own, with the love and parental warmth of their foster parents, these children can now flourish mentally and physically. The Family Village follows the guidelines set jointly by HTS and the Jiangsu Provincial Civil Administration, and it is directly supervised by a project director appointed by HTS who works under the leadership of the Gaoyou CWI. Under this rubric, each family is autonomous in conducting its own family life.

The operation of the Children Family Village has proceeded very smoothly. The CWI has created for each family a file which contains detailed written and pictorial records of the children's growth and development. Each family keeps a weekly log, and submits a report of the family's life to the CWI every three months. Each family sets a menu each week, ensuring that the children are receiving a balanced diet. The CWI provides each child with a monthly stipend of ¥200 for living expenses, and the foster parents eat meals with the children every day. The CWI conducts a detailed evaluation of the families on a monthly basis and actually gives each one a score. A monthly salary of ¥1600 for each foster mother is paid after the evaluation. The result of these evaluations also serves as the basis for selecting "model family," "good daddy," and "good mommy" at the end of the year.

Every abandoned infant deserves to have a "home," and the entire staff at the CWI acknowledges that providing a home for each and every infant is the responsibility and mission of the CWI. At present, most of the infants who are healthy or have only minor handicaps are adopted by families in China and abroad, so they have found permanent homes. But a certain segment of the handicapped children remain unadopted, and who continue to be supported in the institu-

⁸ Ms. Zhang was formerly the Director of the Hefei Children's Welfare Institute in Anhui province.

tional setting of the CWI. What more can we do for these children? The most favorable way to nurture them is to have them grow up within a family. With the creation of the Children Family Village, these handicapped orphans are now provided with an integral family environment, thus the inadequacies and flaws of raising them in a collective institutional setting have been ameliorated.

It is true that children have homes only when they have parents, and they have hope only when they have homes. The real benefit of the Children Family Village is that it has given these handicapped orphans a true home. In this home, there is a father who goes to work in the day time, a mother who fusses over the children, and siblings to romp around with. Within a short time, life in this kind of stable and warm family environment has already brought about miraculous changes in the children. In just a little over a year, children who used to be antisocial, introverted and timid have become vivacious and amicable. They have gone from being reticent and wary of strangers to being eager to interact with others, play with other children, and tell their own stories. Both mentally and emotionally, they have truly flourished.

With the passing of time, the fathers and mothers of all six "families" have come to enjoy their roles and to love their children. The various disabilities of these children have not in the least caused them to lose their faith and love; in fact, they have become even more protective and caring of them. In everything they do, they take into consideration the individual characteristics of their children, such as adapting their diets to meet their nutritional needs, and organizing games to cultivate their interests. The result is that these children are growing up wholesome and happy in families filled with love.

In the two years since the Children Family Village was founded, I have visited the children in these six families several times to see how they are faring. In each household, a photo of the whole family hangs in the living room, and all the rooms are neat and clean. One time, I happened to be visiting when it was time for the children to come home for their lunch break from school. The mother had finished preparing a healthy delicious lunch and was keeping an eye out for the children to come home. When the children called out "Mama" as they arrived, the natural affectionate feeling was palpable, and the happy expression on the mother's faces was clearly visible. On another occasion, I went to visit on October first - Chinese National Day - and found several families getting ready to take their kids to the park. One family was about to go attend a relative's wedding, and the parents were taking their kids to the wedding banquet. In another family, the father was in the midst of fixing a tricycle, and several kids were watching and wanting to help. When the tricycle was fixed, the kids happily hugged their dad and gleefully shouted "Thanks Papa!" The familial affection I saw that day was no different from what one sees in any happy family in normal society.

The Children Family Village is a totally new approach to fostering children, and it has opened up a new path in our society's welfare system. For the handicapped orphans who have no possibility of being adopted, this approach is a much more humane and effective way to raise and educate children in foster care. On the HTS website, the vision for the Gaoyou Children Family Village as it was being created was aptly described as follows:

This one-of-a kind children's foster home in China is a benevolent endeavor. We have

every reason to believe that it will become a model for quality care of orphans in the future.

Many pre-school orphans in Jiangsu Province are scattered in various welfare institutions. We feel a special concern for these children. If they remain in these institutions, they would not have access to the early children education and stimulation necessary for healthy development. They need to associate with normal people, live in a loving stable family environment, and receive more and better care.

In the spring of 2005, HTS worked with the Jiangsu Province Civil Administration to bring these orphans to Gaoyou, where we are remodeling an old building into several family apartments. As the building is being renovated, the new foster parents being recruited, new teachers and nannies undergoing training, a team of international volunteers arriving to help turn this dream into reality, and as the children arrive from various corners of Jiangsu province...We invite to you come witness our efforts in the course of these events!⁹

With the passing of time, the Children Family Village has proven to be harmonious, happy, and functioning effectively. The love seeded by HTS has grown roots and sprouts, and is now blossoming. This dream has indeed come true!

The Little Sisters Preschool Program in Gaoyou

The Little Sisters Preschool Program – already described in general terms earlier in this chapter - is an adjunct to the Children Family Village in Gaoyou, and is coordinated with it. The purpose is to give the foster children the benefits of an education as well as a warm family.

This preschool program enrolled children ranging from two to seven years of age, twenty-four of them from the Children Family Village, and two from other foster families in the community where the CWI had placed these handicapped orphans. Two of the children from the village have since reached seven years of age and have moved into the regular school system. The six teachers for this program were recruited by HTS, and their salaries are paid by the Foundation as well. All of them received half a month of training in the Reggio teaching method used in this program.

"Reggio" is named after the small town of Reggio Emilia in Northern Italy. In the 1960's, a group of early childhood educators, most notably Loris Malaguzzi, developed a new approach to preschool education. After decades of experimentation and innovation, it has become a distinctive model for early childhood education – known as the "Reggio approach" – and has gained international recognition and influence. The distinctive characteristics of this approach are: it is supported by the community and the parents' active participation; the school is administered democratically and cooperatively; the curriculum is flexible and is coupled with real-life experience; teaching methods are multifaceted; cooperative learning, introspection, and real-life practice are incorporated into the learning process; the learning process is integrated into an open en-

⁹ The Half the Sky website is constantly updated, and the above passage is no longer on the website.

vironment.¹⁰ The biggest differences between the Reggio approach and China's traditional preschool education are: it is based on the children's interests; the "topics" are determined jointly by the teacher and the students; students engage in various activities such as artistic performances, and knowledge and skills are acquired accordingly and at the right moments. This approach allows the children to learn in a joyful manner. In an open environment that fills them with curiosity, the children will freely explore and learn with self-motivation and enthusiasm.

The Little Sisters Preschool Program embodies the characteristics of the Reggio approach as much as possible. One feature of this approach that is especially beneficial to the children in this program is that children with disabilities are considered to have "special rights" rather than "special needs." Teachers in this program are required to reflect and discuss their progress once a week. Each Friday, they go on the web to share the experiences at their program and what they have learned with teachers at other programs and the program supervisor at HTS. They also maintain a file for each child, including a log of their daily conversations with the child, record of their semi-weekly observations (with pictures), reports sent to the foster parents on Fridays, and the quarterly progress reports on the child.

However, the initiation of the teachers into their new roles was quite an eye-opener. When they first completed the training conducted by the American specialist and stepped into their work full of brand new ideas and happy anticipation, the reality they found was vastly different from what they had envisioned and looked forward to. There were six freshly trained teachers, facing more than twenty children of different ages and varying handicaps. Seeing the dazed helpless expressions on each of their faces, and hearing their cries as they reacted to the unfamiliar environment, the teachers couldn't help but feel crestfallen. But these six teachers unanimously sensed that the first thing they had to do was to turn the children's cries into smiles. At first, the children were not accustomed to their new surroundings, and kept crying when their "moms" dropped them off. Crying has a way being infectious with little children. When one cries, everybody cries. All the teachers could do was to cuddle this one, then that one, slowly soothing them one by one. The teachers did not retreat in face of difficulties. They first cultivated a sense of trust and attachment with the children, and in this process discovered their interests. Then they introduced a series of activities around the children's interests. After a period of hard work, things began to turn around. Now when one walks into the classroom, one would no longer hear children crying, but would see bright smiling faces. The scene is one of happy activity, with some children drawing with concentration, some putting together puzzles, and some assembling wood blocks.

In just two years, the children here have changed tremendously, both physically and in their dispositions. For example, Wei Jiangmei and Yang Wanshu, who didn't use to talk or associate with people, can now take initiative in saying hello to their teachers and in helping other children. One can hear their chatter and laughter as they engage in activities with other children. Shen Mu, mentally under-developed and rather dull and unresponsive at first, has become livelier. At school he would help the teacher distribute materials. At home, he would open the door for his mother when she brings food to the table, and neaten up shoes for his brother and sisters. Shi Zhongfa, born with a cleft palate, mentally normal and in fact quite smart, used to be rather selfish and unwilling to share his toys or food. Now he has been cured of this idiosyncrasy. In class,

¹⁰ Referenced from a Chinese website called "China pre-school education resources" (<http://www.duyp.cn/>).

he would help other children with handicrafts. At home, he would help out with chores like throwing out the trash. How did these tremendous changes come about in these children? They can be attributed mainly to the care and love of the teachers who perform their work with great passion, observe the children painstakingly, and discuss and exchange ideas with each other assiduously. Using the Reggio approach, the Little Sisters Program is flourishing with dazzling success. On May 19, 2007 - designated as "Charity Day" - a benefit event was put on in Gaoyou. The children from the Little Sisters Program spent two weeks preparing a children's fashion show for this event. On the stage that evening, these vivacious and adorable children put on a charming show, drawing rounds of enthusiastic applause from the audience.

Grannies Infant Nurturing Program in Gaoyou

As described in the previous section, the mission of this program is to help abandoned infants up to two years of age in their physical, mental, psychological, and emotional development, so as to give them the best possible chance of growing up physically and mentally healthy. In April 2005, HTS formally established a Grannies Infant Nurturing Center at the Gaoyou CWI. This center recruited a "granny consultant" and eighteen "grannies," all around fifty years of age. HTS provided them with a monthly salary of ¥600, and gave them a week-long training program conducted by the head of the Foundation's infant program, an American childhood education specialist by the name of Janice Cotton. Through this training, the "grannies" learned how to impart love to the infants by fondling and hugging, and how to kindle the children's physical and emotional potential through responsive care, interactive exercises and language.

To create a conducive environment in which the grannies and infants can interact, volunteers sponsored by HTS renovated the CWI's infant room, and added carpeting, mirrors, and various appropriate stimulating toys. The infants now spend most of the day being active in the infant room. Previously, due to the large number of infants and limitations in staff and facilities, infants spent most of their time in their cribs and had little space to move about. Even more critically, the caregivers came in three shifts, so the staff that took care of the abandoned infants was not fixed, which made it difficult for the infants to develop a sense of security, reliance and trust. The caregivers focused their attention mostly on the basic needs and physical development of the infants, and overlooked their need for emotional interaction. As a result, these children often developed self-mollifying behavior like swaying back and forth or repeatedly knocking their heads. The Granny Nurturing Program provided the CWI with a stable team of "grannies"; and each child received the care of a regular granny, with whom she could develop a surrogate parent-child bond. Thus the emotional needs of the infants were met within the crucial period in their early life.

When the grannies were with the babies, they would talk to them in their soft voices, and sing songs to them. When the babies gurgled and babbled, the grannies would respond to them. The grannies gave toys to the babies to play with, and encouraged them to try out new things. When playing with the babies, they frequently fondled and hugged them. Within a little over a year, this program brought remarkable changes in the children. When one walks into the Granny Infant Nurturing Center, the children one sees are no longer listless but have become lively. One hears less crying and more laughter. The terrifying sense of isolation has vanished, in its place is the rumpus of a normal family life. These children are becoming more and more on par with

normal children in terms of their physical and mental development, which is quite in contrast to typical institutionalized children, who are noticeably delayed in their motor skills, thought processes, and emotional expression.

In the past two years, a total of eighty-plus abandoned infants have been admitted to the Grannies Infant Nurturing Center. The Center created a file for each child, with detailed records of her development. When these children are adopted by families abroad, their precious files are presented to the adoptive parents, who are immensely grateful for these authentic records of their children taking their first steps in their life's journey.

As more and more babies from this center were adopted abroad or transferred into the Children's Family Village, their number in the center has diminished. At present, only nine infants and four grannies remain. Comrades associated with the CWI all look forward to the day when no more infants are abandoned, and then the need for this Grannies Nurturing project will become obsolete.¹¹

Footprints of the Half the Sky Foundation

Ever since I hosted Jenny Bowen's visit to Gaoyou, I became deeply interested in the work of HTS, and not only in the background of its founding, its mission, and the projects it has implemented in Gaoyou. I also wanted to thoroughly understand the footprints and impact of this organization in the much larger arena of all its activities. So I looked at everything on the website of this foundation (www.halfthesky.org), and frequently searched for media reports of its activities. Through this process, I have learned much about the course of its development in China and its astounding achievements.

In 1998, a group of adoptive families in America got together and created this foundation. Pooling together their knowledge of preschool education, developmental psychology, and systematized theory, this foundation launched its first project.

In the following year, HTS held a series of conferences in Beijing, and met with the leaders of CWI's in three provinces to explain their endeavor. The Chinese government then gave permission to this foundation to carry out a one-year pilot project in two CWI's chosen from Guangzhou, Jiangsu, Hebei, and Anhui. In the year 2000, the pilot project was launched in Guangzhou and Hefei (capital of Anhui province), using HTS's unique ground-breaking approach. Within a year, the pilot project proved to be a tremendous success, and HTS received permission to expand to other sites. Thus, a third site – Chuzhou in Anhui province – was established in 2001, followed by new sites in Chongqing, Chengdu, and Chenzhou in 2002.

Within the year 2002, HTS greatly expanded its undertakings in China: On June first, Children's Day in China, a model center at the Shanghai Children's Home was inaugurated; two outdoor playgrounds at HTS sites in Chongqing and Chuzhou were built; and the Big Sisters Program was launched. The latter program is designed to provide special help for the older girls in CWI's who had previously been neglected, in order to develop their intellectual potential and im-

¹¹ By the summer of 2009, this hope has been realized. There are no more abandoned infants at this CWI, and the Grannies Infant Nurturing Center has been closed.

prove their future prospects. That year, HTS received a grant from the Ford Foundation to create a training handbook for its innovative programs, and to distribute this handbook to each and every social welfare organization in China free of charge.

In the year 2003, new HTS centers were founded in Shaoyang, Yueyang, Xiangtan, Wuzhou, Guilin, and Beihai. In November, HTS celebrated the fifth anniversary of its founding by organizing a national conference on nurturance education at the CWI in Anhui province's capital Hefei.

In 2004, new HTS centers were founded in Nanchang, Fuzhou, Jiujiang in Jiangxi province, and Luoyang and Xinyang in Henan province. Two more outdoor playgrounds - in Guilin and Chengdu - were built. That year, HTS opened up its headquarters in Beijing.

The following year, new HTS centers were established in Gaoyou, Lianyungang, Guangzhou, Haikou and Sanya on Hainan Island, and Yiyang in Hunan province.

In 2006, more HTS centers were founded – in Nanjing, Shenzhen, Yiping in Sichuan province, and Nanning in Guangxi province. Family villages called "Perpetual Handicapped Children's Village" - equivalent to the Family village in Gaoyou – were established in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Nanning, and Nanjing. HTS hopes to establish two to three model centers in each of twenty provinces in China, to serve as regional models and training bases for other sites in that province.

The reach of HTS's programs is described on its website in these words: "All of HTS's Centers were built by volunteers. Parents who have adopted children from China feel indebtedness and are always looking for appropriate ways to repay this debt by helping the children who remain in China's welfare institutions. To date, almost all the funding for these centers has come from donations from individual adoptive families and friends. As long as there is an expressed need from a local CWI in China, HTS will do its utmost to extend its programs to that site, to directly or by modeling extend its services to each and every needy child in that Chinese CWI."¹²



On top of the main page of the HTS website is a panoramic picture of the Great Wall, with a girl standing alone atop this ancient wall holding over her head an endless ribbon borne afloat by a breeze. The girl, with her gaze fixed on the distant horizon, seems to be making a clarion call. It is a magnificent scene that evokes aspiration and imagination. The website is very rich in content, including a presentation of the Foundation's organization, its various programs, and separate sections of information for adoptive parents, children, teachers, and volunteers. The website goes to considerable length to describe how one may contribute by way of donations and/or work

¹² The HTS website has been updated since this book was written, so that some of the wording here are no longer current.

participation. The following words are found in this section: "Viewed as a business venture, this may be the greatest return you will ever receive for your investment. From a very small expenditure – the mere cost of stationery in a company, you could give a child a future full of hope and change her fate forever. Half the Sky Foundation is your bridge to over 100,000 children in China's social welfare institutions. When you log on to our website, you will discover how easy it is to help. From our website, you may shop to benefit HTS, make a donation to the children, or help more people know about our work, help them open their wings to hold up their own half of the sky."

The website is a major vehicle through which HTS publicizes its activities and raises the funds with which it establishes centers at various CWI's in China to implement its programs. At a conference on the fifth anniversary of HTS's founding, the Foundation made a report on its accomplishments in the various educational programs in China's social welfare institutions. According to this report, in the five years 1998-2003, the Foundation invested ¥ 10,000,000 in developing educational programs in China's CWI's. I was unable to find data on how much more was invested by 2006, but seeing how HTS's programs proliferated in the three years since 2003, we can deduce that the Foundation must have invested even more than what it had in its first five years.

From the website, I learned that as of the end of 2006, HTS had established infant care centers or "villages" in twenty-nine CWI's across eleven provinces, and provided 3200 orphans with early-life nurturing. Through the Big Sisters Program, it had provided 190 children in the 8-20 age range with learning opportunities tailored to their interests, and academic and financial support for college. HTS had employed a total of 530 nannies, 28 nanny supervisors, 185 early childhood teachers, and 59 couples to serve as foster parents in perpetual homes for orphans with special needs. As of the summer of 2007, there were approximately 2500 children receiving education in various HTS programs, and since the first HTS center was founded in 2000, at least 10,000 children have stepped through one or more of HTS's various programs.

What an enormous beneficent undertaking! What a heroic philanthropic feat! Witnessing the deeds of the HTS foundation, we are profoundly touched by the earnestness and love – a love that runs thicker than blood – by which the American adoptive families have demonstrated their gratitude toward the Chinese people.

美国“家乡儿童基金会” **The Homeland Children's Foundation**

The Half the Sky Foundation is not the only organization through which American adoptive families are repaying China's Children's Welfare Institutes. In 2002, our CWI in Gaoyou received assistance from another organization by the name of Homeland Children's Foundation (HCF). When I began gathering material for this book, I made a trip to the CWI to learn about their work.

The HCF is an American tax-exempt, non-profit, privately-supported philanthropic organization. It was founded in 2000 by a team of volunteers made up of ethnic Chinese in the U.S. and American adoptive parents. The Foundation provides financial and materials support for children who remain in China's CWI's, and sustains this support for them throughout their entire

childhood.

The support of the Foundation comes in multifarious forms. The material things include nursery equipment, stainless steel cribs, heating and air-conditioning, interior renovation of infant/toddler rooms, beds and bedding for school-age children, clothing, blankets, medication, and even sundries like toothbrushes.

In 2002, HCF launched a "pilot educational project" for fifty-six adolescent children. The primary goal of this project was to improve the children's self-esteem. Each child in this project received an individual assessment at the outset, then the Foundation provided them with financial aid and remedial support, even clothing and school supplies, and offered opportunities for them to engage in meaningful activities in the community. The foundation even retained a retired professor from Nanjing University to implement and direct this project.

In February 2002, the Gaoyou CWI was the fortunate recipient of a set of brand-new state-of-the-art neonatal intensive care equipment - a type of infant incubator for ill or premature newborns.

In September of the same year, twenty children with special needs in the 7-10 age range living in the CWI came under the sponsorship of HCF. The Foundation provided them with supplements for school fees, transportation, and clothing. With the support of the Foundation, the changes brought about in these children in just two years - in their studies and in life - are enormously gratifying. From the written report to the Foundation made by the project director Ji Mingfeng at that time, we can clearly see the significance and achievements of this project. As observed by the CWI's staff, the children who were involved in the various activities organized by the Foundation have been transformed. They have come to enjoy learning and doing manual work such as cleaning, and all of them have become compassionate and kind.

The Foundation's support for these children was not only financial. Staff members from the U.S. and elsewhere in China have personally taken them to visit interesting places. For example, they have taken the children to the theme park in Suzhou and the dinosaur park in Changzhou, and have taken them to fly kites around Gaoyou Lake. The children's field of vision has greatly expanded. They now feel that there is a beautiful world outside of the CWI. They are much more self-confident than before, and have resolved to work hard on their studies so as to learn more things to improve their prospects for the future.

With the support of the Foundation, some handicapped children have taken special classes in their areas of interest, such drawing, calligraphy, and writing. This has made a significant difference in the majority of these children. They have become more open-hearted and self-confident. They now know how to respect others, and how to help other people in need.

With financial support from the Foundation, the CWI retained a retired teacher to tutor the CWI's school-age children after school. Most of these children had undergone surgery for their handicaps, in some cases multiple times. Typically they were already behind when they began schooling, so they could not keep up with other children, so they developed an inferiority complex. When they had problems with school work, they lacked the confidence to seek help from

their teachers. Now they had their own teacher at the CWI, so they could seek help from him when they had difficulties. This gave the children the necessary confidence and made it much more convenient for them to seek help.

Among the children at the CWI who benefitted from this program, there was a sixteen-year-old girl with her right arm missing by the name of Gao Tingting. In the past, she always dreaded exams, but after taking the drawing class for a while, she was transformed. Now she is able to make beautiful drawings holding the pencil in her left hand. She also joined the calligraphy class, and does Chinese calligraphy beautifully. She has even won several prizes in drawing and calligraphy competitions. Now she has set a goal for herself: she wants to attend the Suzhou Arts School some day. Another case is a girl by the name of Yang Lichang who suffered greatly due to her congenital cleft palate. Even though she had undergone plastic surgery, she was still handicapped by pronunciation difficulties in her speech. She was extremely withdrawn at school, and had some difficulties with her studies, but now she is getting help from the special teacher at the CWI. In the recent semester final exams, she scored 89 in language arts and 70 in math, which is a striking improvement from before. Another case is a teenage girl by the name of Gao Qiuqiu who suffers from dwarfism. In the past, she became flustered whenever she had to do a writing assignment, because she didn't know how to go about it. Now she is enrolled in the writing class at the CWI, and is no longer afraid of writing assignments. This year, she even took second prize in a writing competition!

The final section in the aforementioned report of the project director describes how all those involved with this HCF-supported project are gratified by each little improvement and change in the children. Thanks to the care and support provided by this project, we can now see that our children have been transformed, that they will be able to grow up healthy and happy, and become proper members of society.

In the several years since the HCF was founded, it has implemented aid projects in CWI's of eleven cities in Jiangsu and Anhui provinces, and the outcomes have generally been quite positive. In addition to these projects, the Foundation has facilitated travel arrangements for American adoptive families returning to China to visit. On its website, there is an announcement of an organized tour in the summer of 2007 which American adoptive families are invited to join. The announcement presents a very well designed itinerary and a brief introduction to some of the sites, including the following description of Gaoyou: "Gaoyou is a fascinating town on the banks of the ancient Grand Canal in Jiangsu province. Although the main avenues of the town are modernized, the more attractive relics are to be found in the back streets and the old section of town. For the benefit of those who have not been to Gaoyou before, we provide here a glimpse of the daily life..." The above description on the website is accompanied by a series of photos of notable sights in Gaoyou.

The Gaoyou CWI can be said to be Gaoyou's most important window to the world. Through this window, foreign adoptive families have come to know and form ties with our city, and Gaoyou has received the beneficence and support of these families. And through the Homeland Children's Foundation, we have once again been touched by the loving kindness and charitable devotion of American adoptive families.

5. BUILDING BRIDGES OF FRIENDSHIP

The impact of foreign adoptions

In June of 2006, the China Center for Adoption Affairs (CCAA) celebrated the tenth anniversary of its founding. At the commemorative event, Director Lu Ying of CCAA declared: "In these ten years, all of us in the CCAA have followed the guiding principle of 'everything for the children' in carrying out our tasks. We have conscientiously evaluated the qualifications of foreign adoptive families and carefully matched our adoptable orphans with these families. We have also followed up with post-adoption inspections in order to safeguard the rights and interests of the adopted children as much as possible. To date, tens of thousands of Chinese children have found families abroad, and are growing up healthy and happy." According to one report, in the U.S. alone there are approximately 50,000 children adopted from China to date,¹ and this number is continuing to rise.

International adoption has changed the fate of countless children, and made countless families' dreams come true! It has enabled tens of thousands of handicapped and/or orphaned children begin life anew. Blessed by the love that transcends international boundaries, their lives are being carried to distant horizons under a new sail.

International adoption has also relieved the pressure on CWI's in China. It is estimated that the cost of maintaining children in institutions is at least ¥5,000 per child per year. Therefore, international adoption is a beneficial adjunct to the system of custodial care for orphans within China's welfare system. Moreover, for each adopted child, the foreign adoptive family is required to donate U.S. \$3,000 to the CWI which has cared for their child. The donations can be used to upgrade the welfare facility, and the burden on the national budget would also be alleviated.

International adoption has opened up a window onto China, leading to greater understanding of China by foreigners, especially Americans. In general, American people's understanding of China lags far behind the Chinese people's understanding of the U.S. According to one report,² when Americans first came to China to adopt children, they would bring along a big supply of energy bars and various prescription medication for anything from ring worms to snake bites. For fear of diarrhea, when eating in Chinese restaurants, they ordered hamburgers rather than local foods like noodles, rice or fish. Then there were some who used boiled water for brushing their teeth or closed their eyes when taking a shower for fear of being infected by germs. To them, coming to China was almost like going camping in deep wilderness. But after arriving in China, they discovered that they were way off base. The Chinese hotels they stayed at had amenities of five-star hotels, China's modern cities could make Manhattan pale by comparison, the cities were surrounded by picturesque villages and cultivated fields that surpass artistic murals. They had no idea that life in China could be so similar to life in the U.S.; the only difference being that we speak Chinese and they speak English.

¹ www.xinhuanet.com, Feb. 8, 2006.

² *Huanqiu Shibao (Global Times)*, Nov. 2, 2006. *Global Times* is a Chinese internet news source specializing in international news. Its objectivity has sometimes been questioned abroad.

Another byproduct of international adoption is the transmission of Chinese culture. Foreign parents who have adopted children from China have come to love China and Chinese culture. They love to participate in activities related to China, and have formed organizations with other adoptive parents with similar interests. Many of them have their children learn Chinese language and Chinese culture, so that they could one day become emissaries for transmitting Chinese culture as well. According to some media reports in America, the upsurge in adoption of Chinese children has spurred the popularity of all things Chinese, and has even provided opportunities for new businesses such as "Medical Center for Ailments Common to Chinese Children," "Psychiatric Consultation Center for Chinese Children and Their Guardians," and "Experienced Guidance for Raising Chinese Children." These businesses have proliferated, and some are said to be quite lucrative. As an example of the surge in interest in Chinese culture, a theme park by the name of Splendid China was created in Orlando Florida in 1993, partly as a business venture and partly to spread Chinese culture. This theme park, along with the Panda Club on its premises, was a joint venture with substantial investment from the Chinese government.³ As a special incentive for children adopted from China to learn about China and its culture, they may receive annual passes free of charge up until age eighteen.⁴ The Chinese Embassy has also organized parties for adopted Chinese children and their American families during Spring Festival time.⁵

International adoption has played an important role in deepening the friendship between the peoples of China and foreign countries. American families who have corresponded with me have often expressed the feeling that "It's our daughter who has brought us closer to China." Just because the children are Chinese, these American parents have also become half Chinese; they have developed an emotional attachment to China, and feel a warm kinship with the Chinese people. They would even say something like: "Now if I hear someone criticizing China, it would make me feel uncomfortable, and I'd naturally stand up for China." Because they are parents of Chinese children, they have naturally developed a "love me, love my dog" kind of feeling toward China. An adoptive mother even said:

"Even though I'm not Chinese by race or ethnicity, but my soul has floated to my Chinese daughter's homeland. I am eternally grateful to China for allowing us to adopt our daughter. I am so proud to be the mother of a Chinese child. I want to teach my daughter to be proud of the country that gave her life, and to have her realize that she is a Chinese American."

Actually, the tens of thousands of American families who have adopted Chinese children have become the strongest bonds safeguarding the people-to-people relationship between the U.S. and China. No matter how turbulent the storm, those bonds would not waver. A certain Mr. Zhong, Chairman of the American International Ethnic Chinese Children's Service Center, once said in a press interview: "International adoption will have a positive impact on China economically and politically. First of all, local economies would definitely benefit from having so many

³ This theme park was closed in December 2003 due mainly to unprofitability. There was also some controversy over the fact that this theme park was largely owned by the Chinese government and therefore suspected of being politically biased in some of its presentations.

⁴ *International Children's Hope China Forum*, a Chinese online bulletin board.

⁵ "Spring Festival" is a relatively new term used in China. The more traditional term "Chinese New Year" is still used in China, and remains the preferred term outside of China.

Americans coming to China. These American parents of Chinese children would develop a special affection for China, and virtually become half-Chinese themselves. Moreover, in the U.S., most families that are in a position to adopt children are middle or upper class. Their annual incomes may be around ninety or a hundred thousand dollars, and quite a few even over a million. Children growing up in this kind of family should have a relatively easy time integrating into various levels of American society. They may even have an impact on U.S. policy toward China."⁶ We could say that tens of thousands of Chinese girls have virtually become unofficial good-will ambassadors in forming a new bridge of friendship and understanding between the peoples of China and the U.S.

International adoption is truly a Chinese story: The movement may have been initiated from a yearning for intact families, but it flourished from an earnest respect for the rights and interests of orphaned and handicapped children. It opened a window for the Chinese people to absorb mankind's various civilizations. The story tells of how people of different colors are coming into contact with Chinese culture and understanding China, while witnessing manifestations of the Chinese people's concern and longing for the sanctity of life and the fulfillment of human nature. And most importantly, this movement has brought about in the Chinese people a realization of a whole new meaning for the word "love" in its physical and spiritual sense.

International adoption is also truly a story of the Western world as represented by America: This story presents a vision of a society's mores based largely on the Christian values of charity, sanctity of life, and love for all mankind. The story tells of a yearning and determination to preserve the cultural roots of children adopted away from their homeland, and the determination and efforts of adoptive parents to understand and study that other culture in order to fulfill their yearning. Finally, the story tells of a candid attitude toward the issue of adoption and the open liberal philosophy of raising children.

A bridge of friendship built with love

Looking at the roster of children adopted abroad from Gaoyou, one would discover that these children are almost all girls, and the surname for all of them is the "Gao" in "Gaoyou." Comrades at the CWI clearly wanted to leave a trace of Gaoyou in these children and they found a thoughtful way to do just that. Looking more carefully at the roster, one would also discover that the names of children are aligned by the year they were born, so that a part of each child's name would identify her year of birth. For example, the middle character in the names of all children born in 1999 is "qing4" – meaning "celebrate," and for those born in 2000 it is "ji4" – meaning "commemorate." Just mention the name of an adopted child, and comrades at the CWI would be able to tell you immediately the age of this child, because they can deduce from the middle character in the name which year the child was abandoned and brought into their care.

We have done some statistical study on the professions of Americans with children adopted from Gaoyou. Among the 500 or so adoptive parents in the survey, the largest cohort – approximately 200 strong - are directors or managers of companies; next are a group of over 120 academics - college or high school teachers and researchers; then there are 90-some doctors and 80-some government employees, lawyers and journalists. From this we can deduce that the vast

⁶ China.com December 2, 2003.

majority of American adoptive families are of middle or upper-middle class. They represent a sector of the American population who are affluent, well-educated, and highly cultured.

Gaoyou has a special place in the hearts of these families because the children they have adopted are "daughters of Gaoyou." This sentiment is expressed in these words in a letter from a pair of adoptive parents Holly and Bob Krupinski:

We were able to visit the orphanage in October 2003 when we adopted our daughter Gao Fu Miao. We were pleased to see that our daughter received great care. Our daughter loves to look at the photos we have from the orphanage, and hear about our visit there... The love and care our daughter received the first year of her life can be clearly seen in her. She is very happy and secure. She is smart, loving, kind, well behaved, and a delight to everyone.

In a letter from another adoptive parent – Jody Swiech, we read:

We adopted Gao An Zhen on August 24, 2005. She is now known as Lily Schaffner An Zhen Swiech... We were able to visit Gaoyou a few days after we became a family. My husband and I were impressed by the love and nurturing that the nannies displayed toward our daughter and the daughters of the other parents that were traveling with us. I was overwhelmed by the outpouring of love, and it moved me to tears. I realized that the staff had cared for our children with warm hearts and souls, and it was very comforting to us to know that our daughter was in such a good environment... I am also very proud of her Gaoyou heritage, and will ensure that she learns as much about her city as possible. We feel a bond not only to China and Jiangsu province, but especially to Gaoyou.

A daughter of Gaoyou by the name of Gao Xiaoxiang, born on May 4, 1996, was adopted by another family on Feb. 24, 1997. In October 2003, her parents asked a friend coming to Gaoyou to bring a photo album along with a letter from Xiaoxiang to the Gaoyou CWI. The letter reads:

Dear Nannies,

I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the care and love that you gave me when I was living in the CWI. I look forward to the day when we meet again. Here are some recent photos of me. Warm hugs and thanks!

Love,
Xiaoxiang
Oct. 10, 2003

On June 3, 2007, a major tornado in Gaoyou County struck the two towns of Tianshan and Lingtang. Seven people perished; fifty-three were injured; over a thousand buildings collapsed or were badly damaged; and electrical and communication facilities were disrupted. Three days after the disaster, I received letters from four adoptive families in the U.S. and Canada asking

about how we were affected by the tornado. The parents of Gao Dongdong wrote in their letter:

We just heard of the tornado that did so much damage in Gaoyou and the area. Please be assured that our thoughts are with you at this time. We hope that you and your family are ok and well. Please keep us updated on the status of the orphanage. We hope that there was no damage there, and all the children and staff are unhurt.

Please accept our best wishes.

In the same vein, during the rainy season in July and August of that year when Gaoyou Lake overflowed its banks, several adoptive parents including Charles Day wrote to inquire about the flood. In one letter, we read: "We have been watching the weather news from China and hope that the flooding spares your city."

The story of another adoptive family – this one in England - tells of another kind of link formed between Gaoyou and the outside world. The father of this family Mr. Graham Yates is the CEO of a British company that is a client of the Hongyun company in Gaoyou. His wife, who was born in Taiwan in 1955, has an MA degree in accounting. Because she was too busy with her academic and professional life during her child-bearing years, they missed having a baby of their own and wished to adopt a child. They sent an inquiry about the Chinese government's policy and procedures for foreign adoptions through the CEO of the Hongyun company Mr. Zhang Chunnian. This inquiry found its way to me since I was the vice mayor of Gaoyou City in charge of civil affairs at the time. Subsequently the Gaoyou CWI helped this couple go through the procedures with the China Center for Adoption Affairs and the relevant authorities at the provincial level. The entire process took over a year. In September 2003, the CCAA gave them permission to adopt a girl from the Gaoyou CWI. This girl, named Gao Xinfang, had been taken into the CWI on February 10, 2001, and presumed to be born just the day before. The couple was very happy to receive this healthy, intelligent and beautiful child. To show their gratitude to Gaoyou for this "priceless gift," and to ensure that their child will have frequent opportunities to revisit Gaoyou, to "preserve her roots" so to speak, they decided to bring an international business venture to Gaoyou.

Graham has an old client and friend by the name of Signeur 西尼亚 who is the CEO of a Mexican company that produces high-voltage capacitors. Signeur [Alternative: This Mexican friend of Graham's] had the idea of investing in China, so Graham told him about the favorable investment environment of Gaoyou and persuaded him to locate his joint venture here. He also volunteered to be a stock holder in this joint venture. To get this enterprise off the ground, Graham made numerous trips across three continents, traveling between England, Mexico and China. Where there's a will, there's a way. After over two years of hard work, the three parties – Graham, his friend in Mexico, and Zhang Chunnian – reached an agreement to establish a company called NG Asia (subsidiary of Nueva Generación Manufacturas) in Gaoyou to manufacture high-voltage capacitors. The plant was built with an initial investment of U.S. \$6,000,000, and it officially went into operation on December 10, 2006.

The above example is rather exceptional, but from a long-term perspective, the adoptive families' feeling of kinship with Gaoyou does imply that Gaoyou virtually has several hundred

"relatives" living abroad. These several hundred adopted children and their families will become an invaluable channel for Gaoyou to meet the world and for the world to know about Gaoyou, and are therefore a resource with rich potential.

Continuing our concern for the children, conveying a message of love

In November 2005, I proposed to the Gaoyou Civil Affairs Department that we send a Christmas card to adoptive families abroad. My intention was to let the adoptive children know that even though their birth parents had abandoned them for various reasons, the people and government of their homeland have not forgotten them, and continue to wish them well. My proposal received enthusiastic assent from the Civil Affairs Department as well as from colleagues at the CWI. Comrade Yao Zheng'an in the municipal government designed a beautiful greeting card and we mailed them out in mid-December to every adoptive family in our files. The response from the mailing was initially a bit disappointing. About 10% of the cards were returned undelivered, perhaps due to change of address. From those that were presumably delivered, there was hardly any response, perhaps because what we sent were cards from a government-run institution and not personal letters. For a while, comrades at the Civil Affairs Department and the CWI were disheartened and perplexed. Not having received any reaction for their big effort, they couldn't even tell whether this kind of gesture was welcomed by the foreign adoptive families. Later on when I wrote to Charles and several other adoptive families asking them about the Christmas cards, I was happily surprised by their replies. In a letter from Charles Day, we read:

We were delighted to discover that it was your idea to have the Christmas cards sent last year. I can assure you that they were a welcomed surprise to all who received them, and are being kept as priceless souvenirs. For all the families who have received the cards, thank you!

In another letter - from Robert and Holly Krupinski - we have the following:

Our family would like to thank you for the Christmas card we received from the Gaoyou orphanage. We were so happy to receive this special gift! ... We have saved our card in a special place, and it is a treasure for our family. We will be sure that our daughter knows that the government and the people of her hometown have never forgotten her, and have been blessing her. We know that this will bring great comfort and happiness to her. Thank you for making it possible for her to know this love from her country and hometown.

We had never imagined that a little Christmas card like this would hold so much significance with these families.

In truth, the expression of love and concern takes many different forms. Quite a few foreign adoptive families strongly hope to stay in touch with their children's hometowns. Several families that I know personally often send up-to-date photos of their children to the Gaoyou CWI. During the 2007 Spring Festival, Gao Dongdong's adoptive parents even sent New Year's presents to the children in the CWI.

In order to find out more about how the children adopted from Gaoyou were faring in the

U.S., I took the initiative to get in touch with their families in 2006. I had already established a close relationship with Charles Day from the time he visited Gaoyou in 2005, so I asked him to help me make contact with other families. In an email to Charles, I wrote:

Over the past ten years or so, three or four hundred children from Gaoyou have been adopted by American families. They are daughter of Gaoyou, so of course we are interested in knowing how they are doing abroad. I would like to share this information with the people of Gaoyou by writing articles about the current situation with these children and having them published in the Gaoyou website and other Gaoyou news media. This would also publicize the love that transcends international boundaries and deepen the friendship between Gaoyou and foreign adoptive families. I would appreciate it very much if you could select some families and give me their email addresses so that I can establish contact with them and become their friend as well.

The response far exceeded my expectations. Not long after I sent this email to Charles, I began receiving letters from adoptive families. In one mailing, Charles forwarded nine letters to me in one go. From Robert and Holly Krupinski came the following:

We are friends with Charles Day through our Gaoyou email group. We are so thankful for this opportunity to correspond with you through our connection to Charles. We are grateful to you for reaching out to the adoption community. It is an honor to be able to write to you. We are so glad to know that you want to stay connected to the families who have children from Gaoyou.

From Canada, we have a letter from Robert, in which he writes:

We would love the opportunity to have a relationship with Gaoyou , as this will enable her to know as much about her place of birth as possible. We also are thrilled with the idea of her place of birth knowing how she is doing. We love her very much and feel this is a very important part of her history and therefore her future. We thank you for taking the interest in our little girl , as well as all of the other children who were adopted internationally from Gaoyou. Please consider keeping in contact with us

For a time, letters were pouring in so thick and fast that I almost felt I couldn't keep up with them.

Because fewer and fewer infants are being abandoned now, the peak in international adoptions is already past. The children who have been adopted are gradually coming of age, and more and more of these families are making return visits to the CWI. In each of the last couple of years, more than ten families have brought their children to revisit the CWI and to touch base with their roots. For the children, these trips are a process by which they attain self identity, resolve their perplexity about their backgrounds, become acquainted with their native country, and form a closer relationship with Chinese culture. We should welcome their visits with greater enthusiasm, hospitality, concern and love. We must take good care of the photos and documents of the children from their times at the CWI. When they come visit, we would be able to display these memorabilia so as to make a fine impression and to leave them with happy memories. We should also brief them on Gaoyou's history and culture, as well as the state of its current eco-

conomic development. We should invite them to visit some points of interest, so that the adoptive parents would get to know more about Gaoyou, and be able in the future to filter this knowledge down to their children as they grow up. If feasible, we could also produce an English-language DVD on Gaoyou's history, culture, and local customs and mores. We could give such a DVD to the adoptive families to strengthen their knowledge of Gaoyou and to help them cultivate in their children an affection for their hometown. If circumstances permit, we could even organize a group from Gaoyou to visit the children adopted abroad. Our objective is to support the adoptive families in nurturing their children, to strengthen the friendship between Gaoyou and the adoptive families, to let love transcend international boundaries, and to let the light of love shine into each person's heart.

6. STEMMING INFANT ABANDONMENT AND ENHANCING CARE FOR ORPHANS

While we can take comfort in the thought that the Chinese orphans who have been adopted by foreign families are now leading a happy secure life, nevertheless we must recognize that the love of birth parents – that most elemental, genuine, and natural human love – is lost to them. As the Chinese saying goes: "No gold or silver niche can equal the humble niche of one's own home." Indeed, to the Chinese, family ties rooted in flesh and blood are an irreplaceable anchor and a lifelong watchtower. The adoption of orphans – even with the most positive outcome – is still a bittersweet reality.

It is our fondest wish that all children born under the same sky could bask in love as they grow up. It is our hope that there be no more children abandoned, that every child could enjoy happiness as naturally as the changing of seasons, could be nurtured by suckling at her mother's breast, could enjoy being hugged and doted on by her parents, and could radiate the most innocent splendid smile. This hope mandates that we make every effort to stem infant abandonment, and to fundamentally give every child equal opportunity for happiness.

To stem and eradicate infant abandonment is a complex and monumental task for Chinese society. We must swing into action and tackle the task from various angles including ideological reform, systemic reform and legal measures. Only then would we be able to control, prevent, and cure this social scourge.

Building a rural social security system

One topic that I have discussed with American adoptive families in my correspondence with them is the issue of support in retirement. Here's what I learned from them: After they retire, they will have social security, retirement annuity, and personal savings, so there's no question that they will have enough money to totally support themselves. Of course they also hope that their children would look after them in old age, and their children would most likely do that, but they would not depend on their children, nor do they want to become a burden to their children. Compared with the Chinese, they seem to be much more liberal and open-minded about things like whether or not family relationships are by blood, whether they have sons or daughters, and whether their sons "become dragons" – i.e. achieve great success – or just be relaxed and happy.

In contrast, we Chinese seem to be somewhat narrow-minded, rigid and somber toward these issues. The Chinese outlook on blood relationships, favoring sons over daughters, and hoping that their sons "become dragons" all stem from one motivation, which is to raise sons for security in one's old age. According to Chinese custom, girls are married out, so they "belong" to other families. Only one's own born sons who are sufficiently strong and wealthy can be counted on to support their parents in old age. A child born with a handicap would not only incur medical costs that a family cannot bear, but also would be unable to become a pillar of the family

when he grows up. This then is one of the main causes of infant abandonment. Since support in old age is a crucial issue behind infant abandonment, an important step in stemming this heinous phenomenon is to tackle the problem from the angle of social security.

Since the promulgation of the new population control policy¹ around 1980, the structure of rural households has been drastically downsized. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to rely solely on sons and daughters to support the elderly, especially in one-child families or families below the poverty line. As for those with empty nests, the traditional way of supporting the elderly within the family is even more inadequate. So there is an urgent need to build a system of basic social security for the rural population.

Given the current state of our nation's economic development, to build a social security system in the rural sector would require the coordination of government guidance and voluntary compliance on the part of the rural population. It would also require the determination to devise measures to fit local conditions, to integrate legal measures with ethical norms, and to integrate modern social security measures with the traditional family safety net. Finally, a prerequisite to building such a social security system is the determination to guarantee the most basic subsistence for the rural population.

To build such a social security system, we can begin from the angle of employment. First, we must extend the existing old-age social security for urban employees to employees of rural township enterprises. That is, all employees of enterprises, regardless of their household registration – whether urban or rural – should gradually be brought into the existing old-age social security system. Secondly, we must bring the sector of the rural population with relatively stable income – such as "large scale" farmers, those engaged in industry and commerce, handicraftsmen, rural cadres, etc. – into a rural old-age social security network. Third, we must set up old-age social security for rural people who were dispossessed of their land to make way for urban expansion. The funding for this could come from compensation for the land appropriated. Finally, we must earnestly follow through on the "five guarantees"² in rural areas, upgrade the standards of provisions and service, and bring more of those qualified for the five guarantees into collective support facilities. At the same time, we must fulfill our promise of guaranteeing minimum subsistence to rural residents, to ensure that all those who qualify for subsidy are brought into the five guarantees system.

We can look forward to the day in the not-too-distant future when a system of basic old-age social security is established in rural areas. It would not only allay the rural people's apprehen-

¹ The term "one child policy" is a simplistic term used in the West to refer to China's population control policy that went into effect around 1980. In its details, this policy stipulates many variations depending on different categories of people, so it is not really "one child per couple" across the board.

² This is in reference to the "wu bao hu" system of guaranteeing five items – food, clothing, medical care, housing and funeral – to the elderly without children, the disabled, and children under 16 in rural areas. This system was established in 1956. By 2006, recipients of this government support totaled 3.28 million, and the average amount of aid was ¥989 (\$131.9) per year.

sion about their sunset years, more importantly, it would promote a new attitude toward "family planning" among the rural people, and thus serve an important function in stemming infant abandonment.

Transforming traditional sexist attitude toward family planning

Another crucial issue behind infant abandonment is the traditional attitude toward family planning. In times past, the Chinese had a very strong preference for boys over girls, as demonstrated by such sayings as "more sons more blessings" and "of the three unfilial acts, the most egregious is failing to produce a son." But as society advances with the passing of time, this sexist attitude is gradually giving way to a new set of concepts such as "give birth to fewer but better children" and "birth of a daughter is just as good as a son." But because the Chinese people have lived for over two thousand years in a feudalistic society, and economic development in our society is currently still rather uneven, the age-old sexist attitude toward family planning remains rooted in some regions, especially in rural areas. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the government to guide the people and press for changes in this outdated attitude.

First, we must strengthen the enforcement of rules and regulations regarding the implementation of the family planning policy. Policies serve the function of guiding developments in society. Because the family planning policy aims to drastically change a prevailing practice in society, its enforcement requires strong coercive force on the part of the State. However, through education and knowledge dissemination over an extended period of time, people in society will come to accept and embrace the new concepts. The size of our population remains critical today. We cannot afford to slack off on our enforcement of the family planning policy just because it runs counter to the wishes of the masses. We need to enhance the effectiveness of our public education regarding the nation's population crisis, the crucial role of family planning, and the relevant rules and regulations. We must be resolute in holding firm to the current family planning policy and not allowed it to be watered down. At the same time, we need to strengthen the management of this policy's implementation, for example, in creating and maintaining family planning files for women of child-bearing age, monitoring pregnancies, tracking birth statistics, and making post-partum visits. The floating population is a sector in critical need of more effective management. The multitude of youths in this population must be educated about human sexual reproduction and the proper perspective on romantic love. The bottom line is, we must find an effective way to contain the intractable problem of above-quota births and births by unwed mothers among the floating population.

Secondly, we should implement a system of incentives to motivate people to voluntarily comply with the family planning policy. That is, the government should promulgate a series of economic policies to aid and support families that comply with the policy and to allay their worries about support in old age. In so doing, the masses would be led to relinquish the outdated concepts of "more sons more blessings" and "raise sons for support in old age," and to embrace

the new concepts of "give birth to fewer but better children" and "birth of a daughter is just as good as a son." For example: the subsidy awarded to parents of single children should be paid out in full and on schedule, so that these parents would feel that they are truly being honored for complying with the family planning policy; in building the social security system, we should ensure that the principle of preferential treatment for families who have followed the policy is reflected in the legislation; and a system of subsidy awarded to rural families that have complied with the policy should be put into practice.

In Jiangsu province, the government has come up with a policy whereby a special fund will be set up to provide subsidies to aging parents who have only one child and have difficulty with their livelihood in old age. Specifically, for a husband and wife who have reached their sixtieth birthday and who have had only one child, each of them will be awarded a subsidy of ¥ 50 per month by the government. This is undoubtedly a very humane policy, because it has shifted the strategy from punishment to positive reinforcement, that is, "penalty for exceeding the birth quota" to "reward for having fewer children." In effect, this policy has boosted the existing government restrictions with economic incentives, and boosted reliance on thought reform with solutions to the practical difficulties of having fewer children or no son. It has thereby made the justification of the family planning policy much more compelling to the general rural population, thus motivating them to voluntarily carry it out.

Third, our society must learn to cherish girls. The traditional preference for boys over girls has been an obvious impediment to social development. The abandonment of female infants has not only inflicted extreme physical, mental and emotional injury on these children, but has also created a tremendous burden for society. Even more egregious, some people have used ultrasound technology to detect the gender of unborn children and selectively abort female fetuses, leading to gender imbalance in the population. The fifth national census conducted in the year 2000 revealed the gender ratio of newborns in China to be 116.86, that is, for every 100 female infant carried to full term, there were nearly 117 male infants. This ratio exceeds that from the 1990 census by 5.56%, and greatly deviates from the normal female-male ratio of 103 to 107.³

In a survey conducted in rural Northwestern China, Pu Wei⁴ asked the young subjects of the survey the following question: "If your sex could be changed, would you rather be a boy or a girl?" The result indicates that all the boys chose to remain boys, and all the girls also chose to be boys.⁵ The reason is very simple: In many regions of our country, girls are still subject to varying degrees of discrimination in birth, nurturing, and upbringing. In terms of opportunities for education and employment, their rights are also frequently violated. All these issues remind us that girls must be accorded more love and concern by society at large.

³ *China Women's News*, May 11, 2002.

⁴ Pu Wei is a researcher in the News and Media Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

⁵ *Workers' Daily*, July 11, 2004.

In a well-known and interesting survey conducted by the Care for Girls Association in Austria, there was the question: "If your family had a boy and a girl, but only enough financial resources to educate one child, which one would you invest that resource in?" The result was unanimous: invest in the girl! The reason given was this: When you educate a boy, you will have educated an individual child. But when you educate a girl, you will have educated a family, an ethnic group, and a nation!⁶ A well-educated woman who has transcended her disadvantaged social category would bring tremendous benefits to her family as well as society. So from this point of view, caring for girls is tantamount to caring for tens of thousands of families, and by extension, to China as a nation and to the future of that nation.

China's Population and Family Planning Commission launched a nationwide "Care for Girls" campaign in August of 2004 to strenuously promote enlightened, wholesome mores about marriage and child-raising. The purpose was manifold: to publicize relevant laws and regulations as well as scientific information about human reproduction; to build an environment advantageous to the life of girls; to establish a system of incentives to encourage the development of girls and their families; to provide first-rate service to girls and to families that have produced daughters and have adhered to family planning stipulations; to protect girls' lawful rights and privileges. The goals are to spur the popular acceptance of a modern concept of marriage and child-raising, to advance women's development and gender equality; and to comprehensively bring the population problem under control. With persistent hard work, we can look forward to the day five or ten years down the road when a national ethos of caring for girls will be established, the people's attitude toward procreation will have become much more enlightened, the number of abandoned infants will be greatly reduced, and the ratio of boys vs. girls among newborns will verge on the normal.

Implementing measures for the prevention and intervention of birth defects

Given that China is a nation with a high rate of birth defects and handicaps, it is not surprising that a goodly proportion of the abandoned infants are handicapped. According to statistical analysis provided by the National Population and Family Planning Commission, China currently has a handicapped population of 6,000,000, which accounts for 4.9% of the total population of the nation and covers 18% of the nation's families. Each year, approximately 200,000-300,000 infants are born with congenital defects that are visible to the naked eye. If we add to this number the cases of birth defects that surface within the first several months after birth, the total number of children born with congenital defects reaches 800,000-1,200,000, which amounts to 4-6% of the total births in a year.⁷

The Family Planning Commission of Gaoyou has made a study of handicapped infants born in the period from 2000 through the first half of 2006. The data indicate that within the time

⁶ From the website *China Population Net* <http://www.chinapop.gov.cn>, June 27, 2006.

⁷ Zhang Weiqing, "Perspective on scientific development and China's population." *Seeking Truth*, 2004, no. 2.

frame of the study the total number of births was 34,579, of which 463 were diagnosed by medical personnel as having congenital defects or handicaps. Among these, neurological defects ranked first, with 32.61%; and within this group, the majority are cases of mental retardation and cerebral palsy, which account for 64% of the total. Next in prevalence are defects of the five sense organs, comprising 12.95% of all congenital defects. The vast majority of these cases are deaf and mute. Third in rank is epilepsy, comprising 11%; and in fourth place - at 9.9% - is cardiovascular disease.

What are the causes behind congenital birth defects and handicaps? Experts believe that a combination of factors contribute to this unfortunate phenomenon. One category of causes consists of hereditary factors, chromosome aberrations and gene mutations, all of which can affect fetal development. The other category consists of environmental factors: uterine infection caused by various viruses and germs, increasingly serious environmental pollution, effects of drugs, toxic substance, and radioactive materials.

According to the afore-mentioned Gaoyou study, a disproportionate number of the newborns with birth defects and handicaps are children of rural parents. From this, we can surmise that the major factors contributing to congenital defects among this population are the low educational level of child-bearing couples (with 92% of the mothers having less than a middle school education), living conditions and quality of life, intensive work load, agricultural chemicals, toxic paints and environment pollution, as well as inferior prenatal health care and medical diagnosis. The survey revealed that, among the mothers of newborns with birth defects, seven had been in contact with toxic substances known to cause fetal deformities, and twenty-seven had used drugs. Moreover, there is a positive correlation between the incidence of birth defects and delivery at home, where the mother and child don't have the benefits of hospital facilities and medical care during and immediately after birth.

Every young couple in China naturally hopes to have a healthy, smart child. To the expectant mother who has carried her child for nearly ten months and gone through the complex physical and psychological process of pregnancy, her longing for a healthy child can be well imagined. To have a child born with a birth defect is without a doubt a heavy blow to the mother and the family. It means not only a tremendous material loss and a financial burden, but more importantly it creates a psychological trauma with long lasting effects. While a portion of the deformed infants can survive, the repercussions leave the families and the affected children with never-ending hardship, and also result in a heavy burden on society.

In an effort to stem the high rate of birth defects, the central government launched a "Birth Defect Intervention Project."⁸ This project is divided into three levels. The first level is taking pre-emptive measures before pregnancy. This involves helping women of child-bearing age en-

⁸ This project was initially launched after the 2003 rescission of the mandatory premarital exams to counteract the baneful consequences, but it proved rather ineffectual.

ter pregnancy under normal biological conditions by disseminating information about the optimal way to bear and raise children – based on the known factors leading to birth defects – and providing contraceptive measures as appropriate. The second level of prevention is the prenatal diagnosis and preventive cures taken during gestation. This involves the monitoring and periodic examinations of expectant mothers, so that abnormalities may be accurately detected at an early stage, thereby limiting the birth of defective infants and decreasing the chance of injury during delivery. The third level is the timely treatment of infants born with birth defects. This involves mainly surgical procedures to enhance the chance of recovery from birth defects. In practice, the "Birth Defect Intervention Project" includes the following specific tasks: couples in their child-bearing years are to voluntarily receive premarital exams and consultation about genetic diseases; during pregnancy, expectant mothers should maintain good healthcare and suitable nutrition, prevent infections, take caution in using drugs, eschew tobacco and alcohol, and avoid contact with radioactive and toxic materials as well as high temperature environments. The project also commands expectant mothers to undergo prenatal examinations so as to detect and diagnose defects early on, and to take appropriate measures when a birth defect is detected. Finally it mandates that deliveries be done in hospitals. All the above measures are aimed at minimizing the birth of defective infants.

The "Birth Defect Intervention Project" is a long-term monumental mission which demands tremendous and sustained governmental effort to push through. In order to improve the quality of the population and to build a prosperous society across the board, the government must resort to economic, administrative and legal channels to carry out each and every one of the project's measures. Population and family planning technical service organizations and healthcare organizations must fulfill their respective spheres of responsibility and coordinate with each other. They must disseminate scientific knowledge about the prevention of birth defects to the entire population, campaign for the advancement of family planning and reproductive health, reinforce premarital consultation and counseling, and launch programs to provide premarital and pre-pregnancy healthcare, healthcare during pregnancy and after birth, prenatal screening and diagnosis, postpartum checkups, screening of newborns for diseases and treatment thereof.

As mentioned earlier, many factors contribute to the high incidence of birth defects in our country, so this problem must be tackled from multiple angles. One crucial issue in the prevention of birth defects that deserves special attention in this book because it has often been overlooked is the role of the premarital health check, which is comprised of a "consultation" and physical exams. The purpose of the consultation is to reveal the health conditions of the lineal and lateral blood relations of the would-be bride and groom, so that any genetic, inherent, or contagious diseases would be disclosed. This process would reveal any illnesses that would legally preclude marriage – either altogether or within a certain time frame. It would also reveal whether the would-be bride and groom are related by blood in such a way that would disqualify them for marriage. As for the comprehensive physical exams for the would-be bride and groom, they should include examination of their respective reproductive systems and certain essential

laboratory tests. If any problems are discovered at this juncture, they can be corrected in time so that crises are averted before they occur. In sum, premarital examination is the first strategic pass in the intervention of birth defects; it is a fundamental task in ensuring quality in the procreation of the next generation.

We cannot overlook the fact that premarital exams have not been effectively carried out in many locales, and many young people have no idea what premarital exams are all about. A joke about this goes as follows: A pair of sweethearts went to register for marriage. When asked by the clerk "Have you gone through the premarital examination?" the young lady replied "Yes, I examined everything. His house and automobile are all in order." The clerk tried again to get to the point: "I meant have you gone to the clinic to get an exam." At this, the young lady blushed and replied timidly "Yes, we checked, it's a boy." As long as premarital exams are not managed effectively, it will be very difficult to reduce the incidence of birth defects. In the mid-1980's, China began to implement premarital physical exams across the country. According to statistical studies, by the year 2000, 64.55% of the pertinent population were complying with this national policy, with a breakdown of 75.39% in urban areas and 55.14% in rural areas. Over eight million persons underwent this examination in 2001, and among this number 200,000 were found to have diseases that would affect marriage and reproduction.⁹

Given the above data, it is then especially regrettable that in the new "Marriage Registration Regulations" promulgated by the Chinese government on October 1, 2003, the premarital physical exam was changed from mandatory to optional and voluntary. After this new regulation went into effect, the percentage of couples receiving the premarital physical exam dropped drastically, which in turn has contributed to the concurrent increase in the incidence of birth defects. For a time, we would frequently see media reports with titles like "Rate of premarital exams dropping; newborns with birth defects on the rise." For example, the Beijing Municipal Health Bureau broadcasted the following report in late October 2006, "Since the mandatory premarital exam was changed to voluntary, the rate of premarital exams in Beijing has dropped from 99.14% in 2003 to just 4.29% at present. Since the Xicheng District launched the program of free premarital exams a year ago, the rate has still been just 30% at best. The bureau's deputy director Deng Xiaohong has acknowledged that following the drop in premarital exams, the incidence of birth defects among newborns in Beijing has risen within the past two years."¹⁰

The same phenomenon has been replicated around the country. A similar problem in Gaoyou has been confirmed by data from the Gaoyou Women and Children's Health Center. The rate of premarital exams in Gaoyou was 58.89% in 2002 and 44% in 2003. Then it dropped precipitously to 2.68% in 2004 and 2.45% in 2005. By the first half of 2006, it was down to a mere 2%. Over the same period, we witnessed a corresponding rise in the incidence of birth defects. In 2003, the rate of birth defects among all newborns in the city was 3.4%. Over the next few

⁹ From the website *Chinese Medicine Online*, downloaded January 27, 2007.

¹⁰ Downloaded from the website *March 8 Expectant Mothers Net* on November 1, 2006.

years, it gradually rose to 4.7% in 2004, 6.55% in 2005, and then 7.4% in the first half of 2006. If this trend is allowed to continue unchecked, it will inevitably lead to deterioration in the overall population, and we will likely see a rise in infant abandonment as well.

The problems that have arisen since the legal mandate for premarital exams was rescinded have already drawn widespread concern, and various circles in society have engaged in heated debate on this issue. At this point, it would be virtually impossible to restore the compulsory premarital exams, at least within the foreseeable future. But we could resort to various other means such as civic education and free government programs to spur the vast majority of intended couples to undergo premarital exams, and thereby to build a firm foundation for enhancing the quality of the next generation. Along this line, the Gaoyou municipal government relocated the Civil Affairs Department's Marriage Registration Office to the premises of the Women's and Children's Health Center in July 2006, which effectively streamlined marriage-related services and made it much more convenient for people registering for marriage to follow through on the highly recommended premarital exam. At the same time, the fee for the exam was set at ¥144 per couple, of which ¥80 would be reimbursed by either the rural cooperative health plan or the urban employee medical insurance, so that the actual cost per couple would only come to ¥64. When I did a follow-up investigation at the Women's and Children's Health Center just two months after this measure went into effect, I found that the rate of premarital exams had increased dramatically, from the 2% in the previous six months to 60%. This government undertaking in Gaoyou was much lauded by the vast majority of its young citizens. Our experience is one that deserves to be continued and promoted elsewhere.

Enforcing infant abandonment laws

According to China's Marriage Law, parents have an obligation to raise and educate their children; birth parents of children born outside of marriage are also responsible for all or part of the children's living expenses and educational costs until the time when the children can live independently. In the case of children whose parents are deceased, grandparents on both sides of the family who have the ability are obligated to raise their minor grandchildren. If any of the aforementioned persons who have the legal responsibility and the actual ability to raise a child but shirk the responsibility by abandoning the child, that person would be guilty of child abandonment as defined by article 261 of China's Criminal Law.

The law also stipulates that if the infant is abandoned at a site with no or few passersby, then the intention of the abandoner would be construed as not only unwillingness to carry out the responsibility of raising the child, but rather a malevolent and conscious wish to let the infant perish. Such an act would be tantamount to egregiously violating the infant's right to survive, and the perpetrator would be charged with intentional homicide.

But in reality, it is extremely rare that anyone abandoning an infant ends up punished by the

law. This is due mainly to the Chinese traditional attitude toward the deed of infant abandonment, which has yet to reach the level of extreme abhorrence. Moreover, the people's awareness of the "rule of law" is still shallow, and they may even have a certain attitude of tolerance toward this kind of behavior. Infant abandonment is often seen as other people's private business, which has nothing to do with oneself. Whenever an abandoned infant is discovered, the most common response is to immediately deliver the infant to the Child Welfare Institute. Hardly anyone would realize that the deed of infant abandonment is possibly a criminal act that needs to be reported to the police. It is precisely due to this prevalent mentality that those guilty of abandoning infants usually disappear without a trace soon after committing the crime.

Why is Chinese society so ineffective in prosecuting criminal acts of infant abandonment? In search of answers to this question, I consulted with local lawyers, public security personnel and judges. As they see it, parents who abandon their infants have shunned their duty to raise the children, and have undeniably and flagrantly violated their children's right to life and nurturance. And yet criminal law clearly relegates child abandonment to the category of crimes for which prosecution is to be initiated by private suit. If the circumstances of the crime are relatively light, then the case would be filed only if the victim or the guardian of the victim brings a suit to the court. Yet in the case of infant abandonment, the victim is totally disenfranchised because she is unable to speak, and even her identity is typically difficult to determine, so classifying it as a crime to be prosecuted by a victim-initiated suit makes it virtually impossible to protect the rights and interests of the infant. On the other hand, if the circumstances of the crime are truly heinous, then the case would be investigated and prosecuted by public security and judicial agencies. But because infants are unable to speak for themselves and stand up for their rights, it is all too easy for them to be ignored by public security agencies. Given society's current level of consciousness, it is also difficult for people to ideologically conceive of infant abandonment as being equivalent to criminal acts against adults. Moreover, because most infants abandoned at a certain locale are either borne of parents who migrated to this area to evade family planning restrictions in their own districts or were brought from elsewhere for abandonment, their origins are usually very difficult for the public security agencies to investigate, not to mention eventual extradition for prosecution and execution of justice.

Unfortunately, the common people in China have not yet clearly recognized the unlawful and criminal nature of infant abandonment, which is undoubtedly the main reason why infant abandoners can always escape severe punishment by law. And flaws in the law itself have also weakened the law's ability to combat this crime. A combination of these two factors has made it difficult to deter this type of criminal behavior. Therefore, we must tackle the problem from two angles. On the one hand, we must strengthen our public education on this issue, raise people's consciousness about the rule of law, and instill in them a sense of social responsibility to courageously stand up and inform or testify against infant abandoners, and to take initiative in providing evidence to the police department and the courts. On the other hand, we need to correct the flaws in the law and then enforce it. Through effective implementation of the law, we will se-

verely punish perpetrators of this heinous crime and protect the rights and interests of infants, thereby attaining our goal of deterring or even eradicating infant abandonment.

Awakening the spirit of charity in Chinese society

We are happy to see that administrative measures at various levels to curb infant abandonment are bearing fruit, and this phenomenon is subsiding in Chinese society. In the year 2005, the Gaoyou CWI received only ten abandoned infants, which is less than one fifth of the average annual number in the previous twelve years. In a press conference in January 2007, Director Lu Ying of the China Center for Adoption Affairs declared that along with China's social development the number of children available for adoption is decreasing. Furthermore, because domestic adoption has been on the rise, the number children available for foreign adoption has fallen far short of the demand. In light of this, some foreign organizations have expressed to CCAA their hope that would-be adoptive families be assigned to prioritized categories according to their differing circumstances. These beneficial suggestions have been taken into consideration, and families with more favorable conditions have been given priority starting from the first of May in 2007.

While positive developments are on the horizon, we must recognize that eradicating the scourge of infant abandonment remains a protracted process. As long as infants are admitted to CWI's, the government has the responsibility to nurture them as well as possible. At present, there remain under the care of the Gaoyou CWI over 200 disabled adults, some of whom have been living in this institution for several decades. In addition, there are 58 minors who will remain here indefinitely. A staff of over 100 provides services for these adult and minor residents, and the government provides a certain amount of budgetary support to the institute annually. However, due to improving living standards and rising medical costs in China, the operational cost of the CWI has also increased correspondingly. If we are to improve the living conditions at the institute and to make ends meet, it is not enough to rely solely on funds allocated by the government. We need charitable support from a more caring and concerned society at large.

The loving care shown to the Gaoyou CWI by American charitable organizations – the Half the Sky Foundation and the Homeland Children Foundation – has exemplified a philanthropic spirit that has truly touched our hearts.

What lies behind the American people's fervor for charitable work and for being philanthropists? This is a question that I continuously researched and contemplated throughout the process of collecting materials for this book.

The American practice of philanthropy comes from a long tradition. Anyone who has been to America would discover that many public welfare buildings in the country are named after their donors. Perhaps the best example is the oldest institution of higher learning in America –

Harvard University – named after its first benefactor John Harvard, who donated his library and half of his estate to this institution two years after its founding in 1636.

The economic scale of American philanthropy is quite large and it has enjoyed rapid growth. According to statistics, there are currently over 730,000 charitable organizations in the U.S. These organizations are making enormous contributions in such areas as culture and education, healthcare, protection of women and children's rights, senior services, poverty alleviation, employment of immigrants, environmental protection, crime prevention, social reform, and assistance to minorities. Many primary and secondary schools, museums, libraries, and charitable foundations rely on private donations for support. Americans have also directed their philanthropy to certain endeavors beyond the borders of the United States, such as assistance to African famine victims, refugees in the Balkans, earthquake and flood victims in Asia, and child welfare institutes in China. The scale and frequency of donations by Americans are well-known around the world. According to Time Magazine, Americans donated a total of \$190,000,000,000 in 2002, amounting to 2.1% of GNP, and the highest on record for the past thirty years.

Bill Gates, the world's wealthiest person, owns about \$40,700,000,000 in personal assets. To date, he has already donated \$25,600,000,000 to charity. Recently, Bill Gates disclosed his will, in which 98% of his total estate will be left to the foundation named after himself and his wife, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Among its many charitable missions, this foundation will provide funding for the development of vaccines for the prevention of AIDS and malaria, and for the prevention of these two diseases in poor countries around the world. To his three children, he will leave only a very small fraction of his estate – their family home valued at \$100,000,000 and \$10,000,000 each.

In America, although philanthropy from the super wealthy like Bill Gates is amazing, statistics indicate that donations from corporations and other organizations constitute only 15% of the total, while 85% comes from individuals, and of these 70% are ordinary people. This indicates that charitable donations are not limited to those who are wealthy. 70% of American families have made donations at some point, and the total amount donated each year exceeds one hundred trillion dollars on average. This kind of philanthropic behavior is fervent and self-motivated; moreover the majority of the donors choose to make donations anonymously.¹¹

Money is not the only thing Americans donate; they also donate their time. Volunteerism is a common phenomenon in America. When I was in the U.S., I saw some volunteer crossing guards at pedestrian crossings, wearing bright-colored safety vests, holding high a plaque with "stop" printed on one side and "slow" on the other, attentively escorting school children and elderly people across the street.

From several American friends that I know personally, I got the feeling that Americans' con-

¹¹ A Chinese journal called *Moneywise Digest* (title translated into English), July 2004.

cept of money is quite different from that of the Chinese. In May 2005 a delegation made up of Gaoyou's Publicity Department Director Zhang Qiuhong, Hongyuan Company's General Manager Zhang Chunnian and myself went to San Francisco to meet with my friend Steve Harnsberger about a joint project to set up an exhibit on the history of the dam reconstruction in Gaoyou following the huge flood of 1931. After we met up, Steve took us to see some tourist spots in San Francisco. We were all having a good time, so Mr. Zhang on the spur of the moment invited Steve to have dinner with us that evening, and Steve accepted with a quick "Thank you." After dinner, when Mr. Zhang took out his wallet to pay the bill, Steve didn't do what a Chinese would, which is to compete for the honor of playing host. Instead, he suggested, "How about if we go Dutch, I'll pay my share." So this is the typical way Westerners treat their guests and spend money. On the other hand, Steve is very generous when it comes to making donations. In preparing the exhibition about the dike reconstruction, he made three trips to Gaoyou in 2005. He is not a company executive, but just an ordinary employee, so his financial status is that of a wage earner. But for the purpose of joining us in restaging the history of the Gaoyou flood of 1931 and the subsequent reconstruction of the canal dikes, he donated \$10,000 to the Gaoyou Water Management Bureau. In addition, he donated another \$1000 to erect a flood memorial on top of the dike. In his view, people should control how their money is spent and not allow money to control them. In other words, money should be spent meaningfully. This concept of money really reflects a certain value system.

Of course this kind of generosity can be attributed in part to America's advanced economic development and the overall affluence of American families, but that cannot be the whole story. To find out what really lies behind the prevalence of philanthropy and the magnitude of the donations, I researched various relevant sources and came up with two motivations behind this American phenomenon. One is the influence of Western cultural values, and the other is the orientation given by the U.S. government's preferential tax policy.

Western culture was dominated by Christianity in earlier times, and the influence of the Christian church was prominent in the early days of the U.S., as witnessed by the religious background of the majority of private universities founded up through the nineteenth century. Although religious influence in American life has diminished from earlier times, and religious beliefs have become very diverse, Judeo-Christian teachings continue to be a significant component of the ethical concepts in contemporary American society. So while such ideals as brotherly love, benevolence, forgiveness, and gratitude are deeply imbedded in the American ethos, many Americans are not aware of their religious roots. Furthermore, while Americans tend to be adamant about private property rights, they cherish the notions that "you cannot take your riches to the grave," and "what we have comes from society, so there comes a time when we should give back to society." In America, one often hears people say "it's time to give back to society" when they volunteer.

The U.S. government has also played an important role in encouraging public philanthropy.

To motivate members of society to make charitable donations, the U.S. government has built into its tax codes a series of favorable policies for individual and corporate donors. Monetary contributions and donations in kind may be deducted from taxable income each year. The maximum amount is 50% of taxable income for individuals and 10% for companies.¹² Regulations governing estate and gift tax also encourage philanthropy during a person's lifetime. Like personal income tax, the principle of progressive taxation applies to estate and gift tax as well. As of 2009, estates exceeding \$3.5 million and gifts exceeding \$1 million are taxable on a progressive scale with the maximum being as high as 45%.¹³ On the other hand, individuals may establish charitable foundations or make donations to qualified beneficiaries such as universities and museums to reduce their taxable income as well as the size of their estate. In doing so, they can not only reduce their "loss" to taxation, but also boost their public image and establish themselves as positive role models.

The effect of the American estate tax law on charitable donations is further enhanced by the prevalent American cultural concept that each generation within a family should be responsible for making their own way in this world. In other words, young people should be independent and not rely on their families to hand everything down to them. A corollary to this belief is that a young person without independent skills will quickly exhaust his inheritance and then have nothing to fall back on. This concept is amply illustrated by how Bill and Melinda Gates have allocated their eventual estate when they are still in their prime and their children still at a very young age.

In our discussion about Americans' charitable donations, my friend Charles told me that another important reason why Americans are willing to open their wallets to charitable organizations is that these organizations are well regulated and managed, and donors trust that funds donated to them will really be used on the projects that they care about.

Is the American tradition of philanthropy something that we Chinese can emulate? Actually, from ancient times the Chinese have had a fine tradition of "benevolent heart for mankind and philanthropic deeds to benefit the world." From the "charity land," "charity grains" and free education provided by villages and clans, to poverty relief and other charitable aid provided by religious organizations, from the government-sponsored aid to victims of famine and other disasters to society's support for orphans and the poor, the Chinese people have maintained a long tradition of charity toward those in need.

After the People's Republic was established in 1949, and especially after China entered the era of reform and opening in the 1980's, the culture of charity underwent significant development. Take Jiangsu province for example, within the past couple of years, all thirteen cities under pro-

¹²Relevant information regarding individual income tax is based on IRS publication 526. Information regarding corporate tax is based on the website: <http://library.findlaw.com/1999/Jun/1/127212.html>.

¹³ The U.S. estate tax exemption has varied widely in recently years, and it will again be debated in Congress and possibly revised in 2011.

vincial jurisdiction have established charitable organizations; of the 106 county-level towns and districts in the province, seventy-five have established charitable organizations. The monetary and other material donations collected to date by the various charitable organizations in the province have exceeded ¥2 billion, of which ¥1.8 billion is in funds. This total ranks Jiangsu province second in the nation. On November 18, 2005, the Jiangsu Province General Charity Association was founded. Within the first year of its founding, it had raised donations totaling ¥31,524,600 in value, of which ¥16,764,600 was in funds. With the donations collected by this organization, it has implemented several dozen projects, the biggest of which is the "six aid-to-1,000" project. This project provides aid to one thousand persons in straitened circumstances in each of the following six categories: vocational school students, college students, sufferers of major illnesses in rural villages, sufferers of major illnesses in cities and towns, families with handicapped members, orphaned and/or handicapped children. Through this provincial-level association, the effect of charitable enterprises is rapidly growing.¹⁴ The Gaoyou General Charity Association was founded in August 2005. In the past four years, it has raised over six million *yuan*, and has provided timely assistance to nearly five thousand individuals in need. However, despite the positive trends, we must admit that charity work in our nation is still at the basic developmental stage, and there remain many problems in terms of awareness by the general population, scale of donations, organization of charities, relevant legal regulations, as well as the monitoring and utilization of donated funds and materials.

In trying to solve the problems that we have encountered in the process of developing a culture of charity work, it would be worthwhile for us to draw some lessons from the American people's experience. In my opinion, the most important task at present is to cultivate an ethical concept of charity among our citizens, so as to unleash society's potential to contribute. Thus, charity will no longer be something that occurs only at the government's behest, but rather a kind of self-motivated behavior on the part of citizens. At the same time, we need to perfect the laws and policies that govern charitable enterprises, so as to guide and promote their wholesome development. In addition, we need to construct a self-regulating mechanism for charitable organizations and a supervisory mechanism for society at large. In so doing, the integrity, public trust, and reputation of charitable enterprises will be enhanced.

We also need to emulate the American people's spirit of volunteerism, and learn some of their good methods. Volunteer service can be an important adjunct to our social security system. It can sow the seeds of enlightened love and help build a harmonious society. Recently, I read something from an interview in *Xinhua News* that left me with a very deep impression. The speaker, a German professor of sociology, said the following: "A society in which no one is concerned about disadvantaged groups, no one cares about the interests of other people and society at large, and everyone only strives for his own benefits is a society that has no future and is doomed to fail. Volunteer service is very important to any society. Without it, a society cannot develop. Now that China is in the process of constructing a harmonious society, it must vigor-

¹⁴ *Xinhua Daily*, November 17, 2006.

ously promote the spirit of volunteerism."¹⁵ We must revitalize the Chinese people's traditional virtues, and develop a pervasive social atmosphere of "taking joy in helping others and contributing to society." On our existing foundation of "learn from Lei Feng and do good deeds,"¹⁶ we can construct a volunteer service system with Chinese characteristics. As the Chinese people embrace the spirit of volunteerism, it will become rooted in their value system, and serving others will become a self-motivated way of life. We must act quickly to promulgate relevant laws, so that we may proceed to organize, encourage, and regulate volunteer activities. We need to establish organizations to register volunteers, receive their applications for volunteer service, develop training programs for volunteers, expand the sphere of volunteer work, assess the effectiveness of volunteers, and manage records pertaining to volunteer service. These functions are all necessary in order for volunteer organizations to operate efficiently. Lastly, we also need to establish foundations, so as to build endowments to provide financial support for volunteer organizations.

In Chinese society today, there are sectors in the population in need of aid – destitute people, victims of natural disasters, handicapped people, and children in welfare institutions. Our central government has set a standard for the care of orphaned and handicapped children which guarantees their basic rights and needs, and in some cases improves their quality of life. This standard is met in a wide variety of ways, including: institutional care, care under guardians, assisted care by society, foster care in families, and domestic adoptions. But in our society there remains a great need for more charitable contributions. As the Minister of Civil Affairs Li Xueju declared at the recent All China Charity Conference, "The Chinese people yearn for the development of charitable enterprises. The times are calling for the emergence of a multitude of philanthropists. The essence of charity is love, and love should be the basis of human life. If only each person would contribute some love and give others a helping hand, our society would be transformed into a beautiful world."

¹⁵ *Xinhua Net*, May 22, 2006.

¹⁶ Lei Feng was a lionized role model promoted by the Chinese government during the Maoist era.